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THE GREAT BRITISH COMICS MAGAZINE!

EXCLUSIVE! PAT MILLS INTERVIEW

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HATCH PULP

ALBION

FRANK MCDIARMID

ISSN 1754-954X

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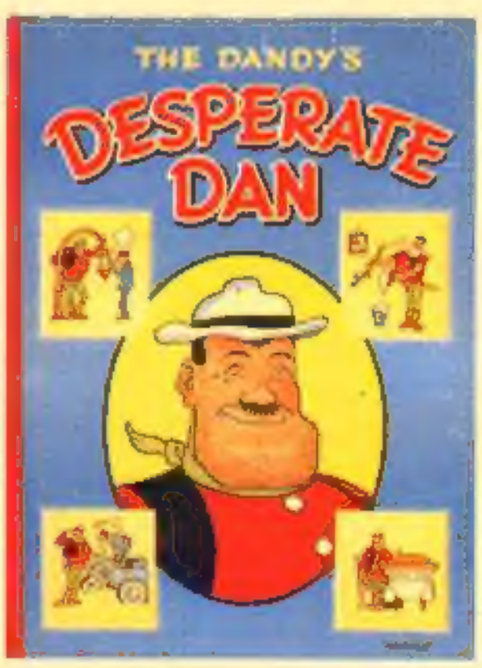

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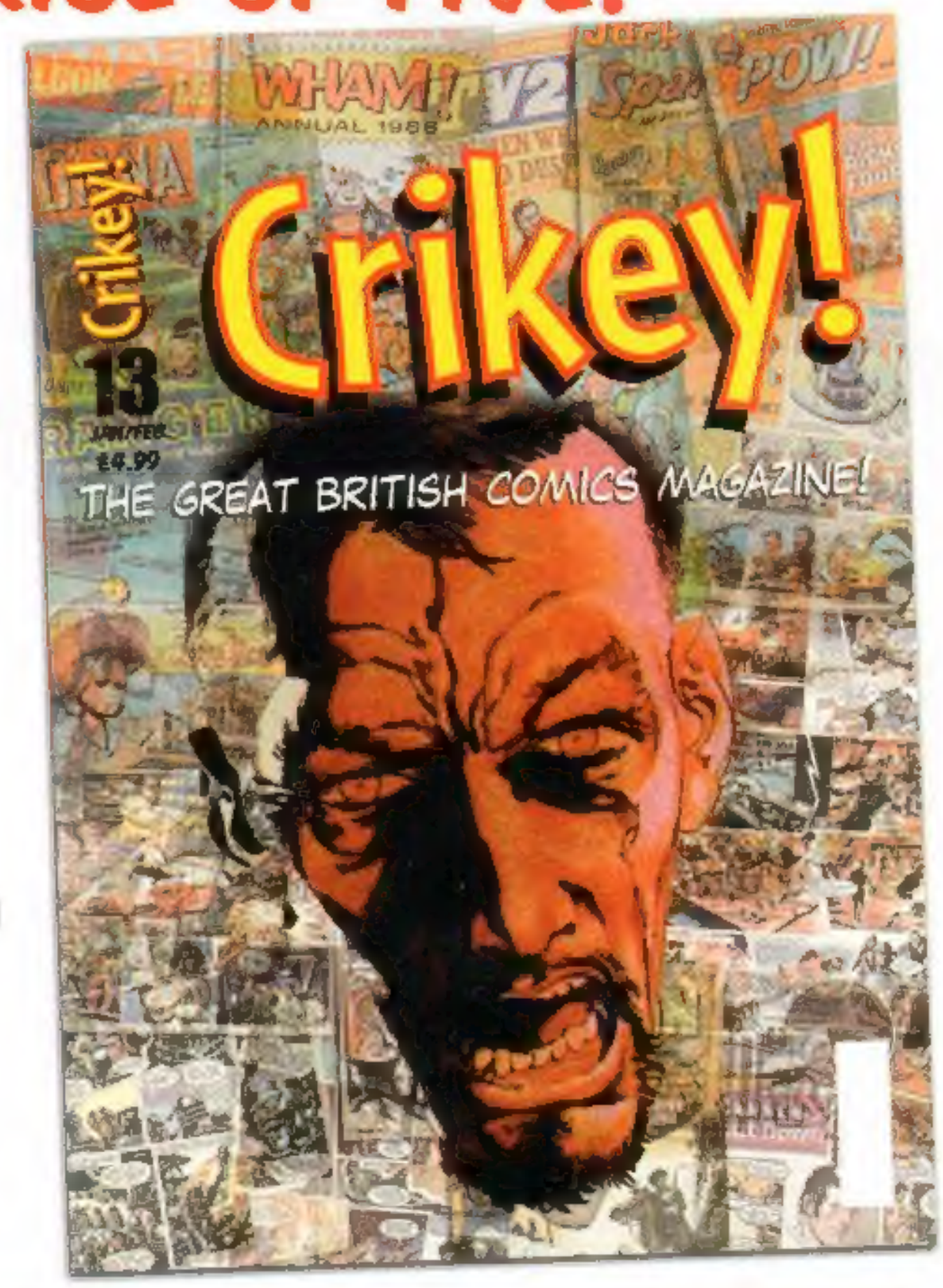

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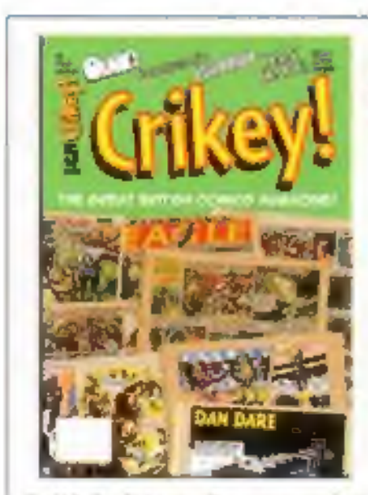

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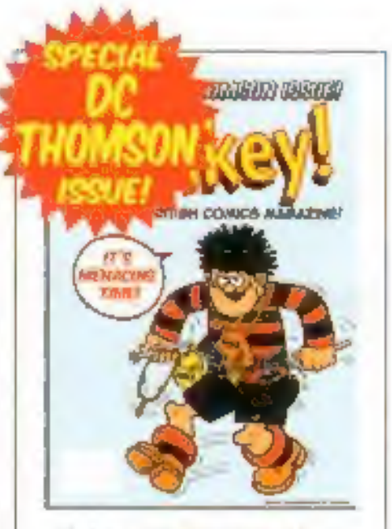

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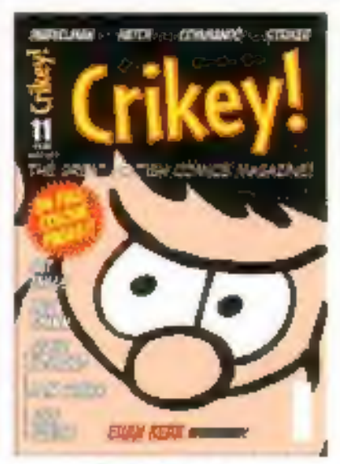
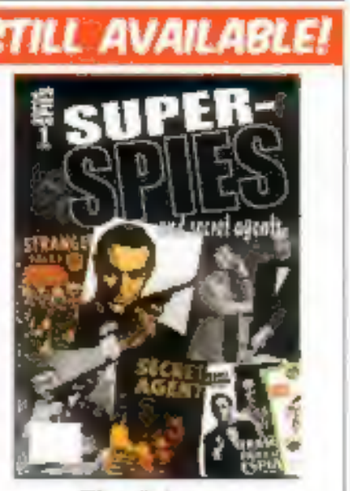


Jeff Hawke
Striker
Marvel UK
Dez Skinn
Dennis the Menace

STILL AVAILABLE!



The Prisoner
SHIELD
Special Agent 21
James Bond
The Champions

WELCOME TO

Crikey!

THE GREAT BRITISH COMICS MAGAZINE!

Glenn B Fleming

Publisher/Editor/Designer

Welcome to the second issue of the 'new' look *Crikey!*. The revolution continues - and how! We were sold out in a few places within a couple of weeks and received re-orders from several of the specialists shops not too long after that. The *Crikey!* revolution is surging ahead and a lot of it is down to you - the reader - and we thank you for that!

In this issue, we have an article by and an interview with none other than writer Pat Mills, co-creator of *2000AD* and many, many strips we have enjoyed over the years. Then, there's Leah Moore, John Reppion and veteran artist Frank McDiarmid chatting to us in in-depth interviews.

We also feature an exclusive look at a new strip by legend John M Burns and John Dakin - 'Miranda' makes her world debut in this issue!; and to balance that we have an old favourite from British cartoonist Peter Maddocks. Sneak previews of up and coming strips, old and new artwork, Stephen Poppitt covers that long lost series 'The Persuaders'...and oh, yeah... Tony Ingram continues to shower the world with his ramblings on *Dr Who* and *Albion* amongst others! And there's lots more!

Let us know what you think of this issue!

Glenn

Tony Ingram

Co-Editor/Writer

We're branching out a bit this issue as *Crikey!* acquires its very own strip section, a fairly obvious addition to a magazine about comics, but one which it's nevertheless taken us over two years to think of. We're dumb like tha...uh, I mean, we like to fully consider all the pro's and cons before committing ourselves. Anyway, it's here now, and we hope in the months to come to give you a mix of strips old and new, some originated just for us, and some tasters of what's coming up in the wider world of British comics. We've made a good start on that this issue since, in addition to Burns and Dakin's *Miranda*, Peter Maddocks' *Four D Jones*, and another dip into the weird world of *Hatch*, we also have a teaser for Pat Mills and Olivier Ledroit's *Requiem: Vampire Knight*, now on sale from Panini UK after taking Europe and the US by storm. Comics are still healthy after all, it seems. But don't worry, we're not forgetting *Crikey!*'s primary mission, to bring you the best comics of days gone by. Just ask D-Day Dawson...

Tony

Contributors this issue:

Glenn B Fleming, Tony Ingram, John M Burns, John Dakin, Jody Kihara, Peter Maddocks, Justin Marriott, Pat Mills, Lee O'Connor, Stephen Poppitt & Paul Squires.

Special thanks to Nigel Fleming, Dave Houston, Peter Moore & David Roach.

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Glenn B Fleming: Publisher

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He was one of Battle Picture Weekly's most popular heroes, responsible for its successful launch in the 1970s. So who killed off...

D-DAY DAWSON

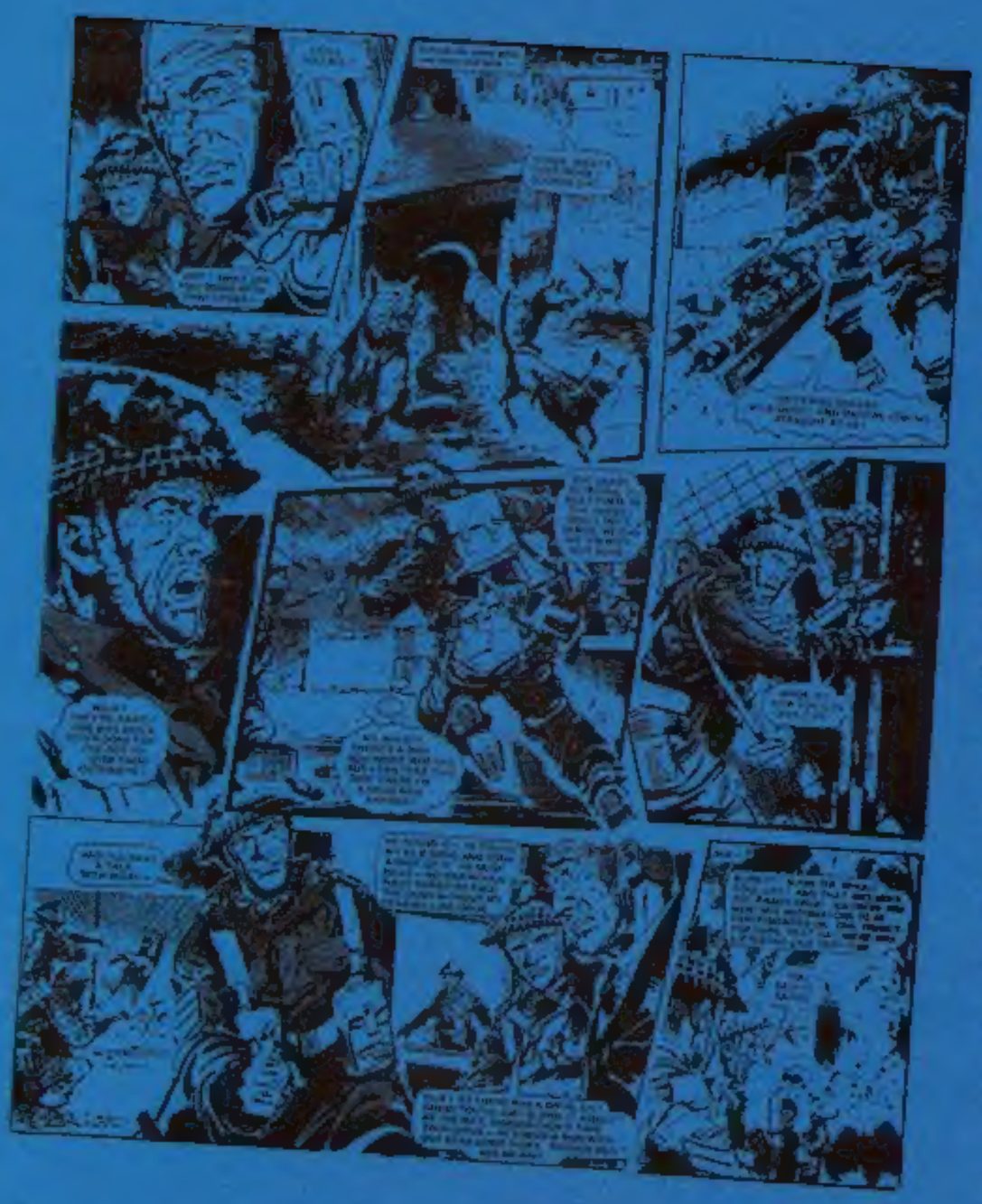
BY PAT MILLS

D-Day Dawson was *Battle*'s first popular hero; he was responsible not just for the successful launch of the comic, but he also made possible the boys comic revolution of the 1970s that followed. Yet today, although fondly remembered by mainstream readers, he is barely noticed by fandom who - with some justification – prefer *Major Eazy*, *Charley's War*, *Darkie's Mob* and other *Battle* classics. But without *D-Day Dawson*, none of these stories would have happened and I think it's interesting to know why and to take a look back at his creation.

John Wagner and myself were commissioned by IPC Magazines to create a new-wave comic, the boys' equivalent of Gerry Finley-Day's hugely popular girls comic, *Tammy*, which began the comics revolution. Entitled *Battle*, it was designed to stop the comic slump as sales on old-style comics like Lion and Valiant plummeted. We were instructed to produce *Battle* in complete secrecy, in a locked office, in case the old regime found out and complained to the unions or management. *D-Day Dawson* was one of our first creations; our answer to *Union Jack Jackson* the lead story in the rival comic *Warlord* produced by DC Thomson. Our premise was simple: Sergeant Dawson stops a bullet on D-Day on the Normandy Beaches and has maybe a year to live. He has twelve months–twelve self-contained episodes in the comic–to reach Germany and victory. A soldier with a death wish and nothing to lose, each week he takes huge risks to achieve his objectives.

We knew it would be popular; it had a strong heroic, repetitive formula that would register with the readers, so we insisted on it going at the front of the comic, even though our managing editor, John Purdie (from the girls comic department), thought it too simplistic and said it should be placed towards the back. We agreed that it was a rather simple tale, but we sensed that the first story in the comic should be very accessible to the reader. Complexities could come later. And if twelve episodes seems rather short now, that was normal to us because of our girls comic background where there was a constant turn-over of stories. If the story was a hit, we knew we could always dream up a replacement with a similar death wish formula.

(ABOVE & BELOW): DEATH DEFYING ANTICS BY D-DAY DAWSON. ART BY COLIN PAGE



We couldn't write every story in *Battle* ourselves, so we commissioned Gerry Finley-Day to write 'Dawson'. We chose Gerry because we wanted to get away from the writers of the old regime who we knew would never adapt to the new wave and DC Thomson writers who were excellent but often rather staid. *War Picture Library* writers were not an option because they were writing for a different market. In fact, Gerry, John and I myself had all written for the libraries, but we knew *Battle* had to have an entirely new pacing. Gerry brought not only his very radical thinking from *Tammy* to bear, but also his experience in the Territorial Army, and that is why his early *D-Day Dawson* stories feel so right. Because of his military background, he knew what he was talking about and the readers sensed and responded to this. It is why his many other war stories for *Battle*, *Action* and *2000AD* have also had such a good reception from readers; and why when he has been replaced by more 'fashionable' writers (e.g. on *Rogue Trooper* or *Fiends of the Eastern Front*), the stories have not been as popular. It is a shame that comic historians have consistently ignored Gerry's achievements on *D-Day Dawson*, *Rat Pack* (created by Gerry), numerous other *Battle* stories; *Hellman of Hammer Force* (*Action*); *The VCs* and *Rogue Trooper* (*2000AD*)

Next we come to the artist and here we had little choice–there were studio deals in place with Italy and Spain and we had to use specific artists. I believe we commissioned an Italian artist who was fine, a good storyteller, >

NONE STOP ACTION! (ABOVE): ART BY JIM WATSON (BELOW): ART BY COLIN PAGE

RY-HUNTER!
CAN HEAR FIRING, SARGE! SOUNDS AS IF IT'S COMING FROM THE NEXT STREET
HEY'VE GOT US PINNED DOWN, SIR
HEY, THE SARGE IS STICKING HIS NECK OUT AGAIN! GIVE HIM COVERING FIRE, LADS
CAPTAIN OF THE MIDSHIRES! EARLY SHOW YOU WHEN YOU CAME BURSTING IN, SIR— THOUGHT YOU WERE A JERRY
SEEMS WE HAD THE SAME IDEA ABOUT THIS PLACE, SERGEANT. LET'S GET UPSTAIRS.
HERE COMES MARLOW WITH THE LADS! HE'S LOOKING DOWN AT LAST!
MORTAR BOMB! GET DOWN!
HAVE TO SILENCE THE MORTAR BEFORE THE PLATOON IS PINNED OUT!
DAWSON'S GOT FIRE TO THAT LOAD OF HAY. HE'S DRIVING STRAIGHT AT THE MORTAR. HE'S DOING IT!
MORTAR HAS GO
FIRE THE SMOKE!
MADE MY HEAD OF A LOT OF BULLETS FLYING ABOU
AND THAT TAKES CARE OF THE MACHINE GUNNER!
Dawson could not see what was happening in the side street
HIYA, MIDSHIRES! OUR SERGEANT DAWSON CLEARED THE WAY FOR YOU!
FOR ME THERE WON'T
ALL RIGHT, DAWSON, I'VE LEARNT TO LIKE YOU IN SPITE OF MYSELF
MY FUTURE WILL SOON BE OVER. HOW MUCH LONGER WILL THIS BULLET GIVE ME TO PROTECT DAWSON AND MY MEN?

exciting but not compelling. I think if we had found a more individual artist, *Dawson* could have gone on to be a fan classic and –just for a moment–it almost happened. Badia (see *Crikey!* 8), Galvez and Romero (see *Crikey!* 9) all had similar styles and either Badia or Galvez sent in a single full page sample picture of *D-Day Dawson*. It took our breath away. It was brilliant! Full of life! In your face! Dangerous and deadly! Everything comics should be! Okay, there was one-er-small problem , he'd drawn him looking like a Spanish foreign legionnaire, but never mind, uniforms can be fixed, soul can't, and this Dawson looked like a tormented Rambo on a killing spree. John Purdie was horrified, not so much by the inaccurate uniform, but by the daring quality of the art. It was too daring for him. And who knows? Maybe he was right. Maybe he was afraid of censorship (a big issue at the time), or maybe he understood the readers better than I did. Because even today there are many readers who far prefer solid, good, safe, but rather conventional images to great artwork that takes risks and seriously kicks ass. Sad but true. Anyway, I squirreled that brilliant image away in my head and used it as one of my mental templates for *Action* and *2000AD* where I could call the shots.

Battle came out and was a huge success–so much so that the boss of the old regime was furious and snubbed me in the street for my 'treachery'. His old order had wanted *Battle* to fail so the boys comics department would collapse and they could collect their redundancies. John Wagner and I pumping new energy into boys comics must have been their worst nightmare. *Dawson* was, far and away, the most popular story; maybe 25% ahead of other stories like *Eagle* or *Rat Pack*. The readers loved him. Partly because he was a heroic archetype, but more importantly because he had a death wish. But now came the catch. We were all set to kill *Dawson* off after 12 episodes, but John Purdie now said, no–you can't do that anymore. The readers are buying *Battle* for *D-Day Dawson*. You have to keep him going. So we did and for a while it was okay, but then we realized he was so popular, he was never going to die!

This was a problem for us as creators; it was embarrassing that a hero with a year to live should continue year after year, repeating the same lines, following the same formulaic plots. It didn't feel real. It didn't feel right. It was everything John Wagner and I had been fighting against in the old regime comics. But Purdie was absolutely correct, you don't kill off a successful character, and, not for the first time, I found myself out of step with market forces. In retrospect, I think what should

MONTAGE ART BY COLIN PAGE.
(RIGHT): BATTLE COLOUR COVER ART BY OLIVER FREY

have happened was for either John Wagner or I to have taken over the story and turned it into a *Darkey's Mob* or a *Charley's War*. We should have broken out of the constricting, self-contained weekly episodes, worked in some genuine characterisation and reality, whilst maintaining the central premise. However, when a formula goes down well with the readers, the golden comic rule is you stay with it until they are tired of it. There is no way management would have allowed us to tamper with a story like *Dawson* that was on such a winning streak.

So instead, I regret to say we killed *D-Day Dawson*. It was never the readers who loved him almost to the end. It was us, his creators. All of us on the editorial side increasingly disliked Dawson and so we plotted his demise. I recall us sitting around and actually saying "How do we kill him off?" So we gave it to lesser writers and artists thinking they would do him in, but–to our amazement–he remained popular. The readers hung on in there and still voted him number one. Still way ahead of other stories. The hero who was meant to die in 12 weeks just wouldn't fade away, because we had got the story formula so right, it was now writer-proof! So we finally gave it to certain lesser artists and a skilled but very dry writer in the hope that their combined talents would bump him off and–yep–they did the deed. The story plunged in the popularity polls and we were given permission to kill him. We passed it back to Gerry to write the concluding death of *D-Day Dawson* episode and I remember being moved by his passionate, stylish and excellent conclusion.

Looking back, it seems rather churlish what we did to *Dawson* I like to think that today I would somehow have rescued him rather than consign him to such a slow, drawn-out, ignominious death. He deserved better and so did the readers who stood by him through thick and thin, through increasingly poor stories and art, and so I'm sorry about that and for my part in his downfall. But it also highlights an issue that sometimes surfaces in fiction: namely when a character is successful, does a creator still have the right to kill off 'his baby'? Many fans would say no, it's their baby now. I understand and sympathise, but I don't entirely agree, because I have a European perspective where creator rights are absolutely sacrosanct, rather than the British and American perspective where they are not and creators can be replaced if we step out of line.

Anyway, it's good *Dawson* is remembered here in *Crikey!* and also in Titan's forthcoming *Best of Battle* which I have insisted includes D-Day Dawson, so he takes his rightful place in *Battle*'s hall of fame. ●

Pat Mills has been working in comics for something like forty years now. He's worked for DC Thomson, IPC, Marvel UK and pretty much every other publisher you can think of. He created Battle, Action and 2000AD, has written everything from the Bumpkin Billionaires to Bill Savage, and was one of the authors of Song of the Space Whale, one of the most innovative Doctor Who adventures never to actually make it to the screen (it has now been adapted for Big Finish audio's range of 'lost' stories to be released on CD). There isn't a lot Pat hasn't done, really. Crikey! *asked him why he did it...*

PAT MILLS

THE GODFATHER OF BRITISH COMICS

Crikey: *OK, the obvious question first: how long have you been working in comics and how did you end up doing so. You originally intended to be a journalist, correct?*

Pat Mills: I'd always wanted to be a writer and had been sending things to magazines, writing sketches and plays since I was a teenager. So working for D.C. Thomsons was a logical step. It was the early 70s and I began by writing horoscopes for them for the Dundee Courier, which I think was the job all new people began with. Of course I knew nothing about horoscopes, but what's to know? Then after a few months they put me on Romeo, as a sub-editor.

C: *Tell us about your time on Romeo–a title that had a rather different feel to much of Thomson's output.*

P: Romeo was a romantic love story magazine; paper-wise and image-wise we didn't look as cool as Jackie, but our stories were better because that's all we had to offer. For example, we did a love story about the Crimean War, very anti-war, written by John Cornforth and beautifully illustrated by Esteban Maroto, an artist who is very highly rated amongst fans. Far and above a typical Mills and Boon-style romance. Some of those stories were there, too, but the quality of the magazine was really down to the editor Harry Watson who was very dedicated to the magazine, was constantly looking for innovations and had a poetic approach which translated into a very dream-like feeling for Romeo. Okay, easy to mock it these days, but I think it really worked.

Seeing artists like Maroto and

(BELOW): THESE GUYS ARE FROM 'DICE MAN', A ROLE PLAYING GAMES MAGAZINE LAUNCHED IN 1986 AS AN UNLIKELY OFFSHOOT OF 2000AD. SADLY, IT LASTED ONLY FIVE ISSUES

Buzzelli in Romeo gave me an interest and an appetite for comics which I previously had shown no interest in. Although I've always loved cartoons.

I worked on other aspects of the magazine, for instance, the music pages, but we were very much a poor relation of Jackie there. Thus I can recall ringing up Elton John's agent and wanting to do an interview and it being made very clear that the agent didn't see us as right for Elton's image.

C: *How long were you at DCT and why did you leave? Did you move straight to IPC after that?*

P: I went freelance after a year or so, not least to make some serious money. I was prepared to write for a number of markets but just about everything I wrote for IPC - girls, boys, war library , fun comics and the occasional romantic comic - seemed to get accepted so I was soon inundated with work. So much so that John Wagner, also working on Romeo, joined me to share the workload.

C: *How did you break in to IPC?*

P: To break into the fun comics, I wrote an entire issue of *Cor!*, with some input from John Wagner, of which 75% of the stories were accepted. There were two that weren't. I couldn't for the life of me write a Gus Gorilla, the cover character. In fact, it took me three days and made me feel vaguely suicidal to come up with something. Similarly, both John and I had equal trouble with Percy Puffer, who was great at blowing things. I found the character unedifying and I once again sank into a deep depression. Of course the obvious thing to do with Percy would have been unacceptable. In the end, we had him blowing a vapour trail across the sky from a plane. Written in the vapour was "Percy Puffer really blows your mind". (How true) This one was rejected with the comment: "Hippy angle not wanted".

C: *You seem to have covered pretty much all the bases at IPC: girls' comics, War Picture Library, Whoopee, the lot. Did you enjoy writing the humour comics?* Bumpkin Billionaires *and* Frankie Stein *seem somewhat at odds with the kind of material you're best known for these days.*

P: Yes, I wrote several lead stories for the humor market. I regarded DC Thomson's comics there as being infinitely superior to IPC, especially *Sparky*. DCT's had more black humour, more genuine humour, rather than formula inane stories. But IPC comics were popular, readers seemed to like the formula stories, even when they were crass and unfunny, so they must take some of the responsibility for how awful they were. Sorry, but it's an unfortunate and unpalatable truth. Those bloody vote charts often showed really terrible stories were loved by readers. Writers, artists >

2000AD, THE SELF PROCLAIMED 'GALAXY'S GREATEST COMIC' DISPENSING THRILL POWER SINCE 1977

and editors were just giving them what they appeared to want. Compare for instance the rich art and intense Pythonesque story style of *Sparky's Puss n Boots*, with the unedifying formula of *Ivor Lott* and *Tony Broke*. Okay, it presses buttons–rich kid and poor kid–but in a very calculated, formula way. There's no real *oomph* to it and I wrote some of them.

I'd find it so depressing I wrote the first draft of humour stories, one after the other, on a wallpaper roll so I never had to take the pages out of the typewriter and lose my concentration. Otherwise I'd have gone for a walk, anything rather than keep hammering it out, but I had a mortgage so I couldn't stop.

Let me give you another example. Ken Reid–a total genius–worked for Odhams on *Smash!* and *Wham!*, I think. He originated *Frankie Stein*; the stories were surreal wild; far wilder than Monty Python but on a par with, and refreshingly free of Cambridge Footlights elitism. This is a rare working class hero. His *Jonah* (for *Beano*) is a masterpiece.

Anyway, when IPC bought Odhams, some of Ken's strips were toned down or dropped. One fantastic story about germs was seen as disgusting and shelved. And *Frankie Stein* (revived in IPC's *Shiver and Shake*) was drawn by a simpler artist Bob Nixon who was very popular. It was mainly written by me and it was okay, but it wasn't feeding my soul. I said to the editor Bob Paynter, why not bring Ken back? After all it was his strip. I'd have happily left the strip to see this genius return...But Bob said no, they had to contain Ken, stop him constantly adding his subversive touches. He'd keep sneaking stuff in and they'd keep whitening it out, Bob told me with a certain satisfaction. But they never did contain Ken, even though many other writer and artist talents were castrated by this safe formula approach

Years later, when I was creating *2000AD*, I discovered Ken had submitted a story about the grotesque survivor of a nuclear holocaust who every week tried to kill himself and every week was prevented by some grotesque mutation on his back. Brilliant! I wanted to run it. I had the authority from the Publisher to do whatever I liked, so I could buy it for *2000AD*, but the comic establishment said they'd lost it when they discovered my interest. Yeah, right. Passive aggression, resistance to change was endemic at the time.

Ken is up there were Ronald Searle, Monty Python and Giles. He deserves to be remembered as one of the great cartoonists of the 20th century and I hope

(BELOW & OPPOSITE): PAT CREATED TWO OF THE BEST SELLING COMICS OF THE 70S IN BATTLE AND ACTION. HE WOULD LIKE IT TO BE KNOWN, HOWEVER, THAT HE WAS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR COR!

one day DC Thomson will reprint, or allow to be reprinted, his work as a solo volume, notably *Jonah*.

C: *You then worked on* Battle, *which seems to have ignited a real creative spark in you. The* Battle *strips were largely ignored by comic's fans for ages but they seem to be undergoing something of a reappraisal lately. Are you pleased?*

P: I also wrote for and edited girls comics. The new wave of girls comics, created by Gerry Finley-Day was hugely successful and replaced girls comics that were out of date and plunging in sales (e.g. *Sally & June* and *Schoolfriend*). Traditional boys comics were also doing badly (e.g. *Lion* and *Valiant*), so the idea was to revive them by bringing girls comic thinking to a new range of boys comics. Myself and John Wagner were assigned to create the first of them–*Battle*. Change was fiercely resisted by the comic establishment, so we had to produce it in a locked office and not reveal to anyone what we were working on.

I'm delighted that fandom is appreciating Battle strips. Ezquerra and Gerry's work is especially well thought of and deserves recognition. And John Wagner's *Darkie's Mob*. I'm very protective of my *Charley's War* regarding it as in a special category and with important implications that are largely ignored by today's comic book establishment... namely, that an anti-war, radically political story can be more popular than regular war adventure stories. (Charley was the number one story in *Battle* for its entire World War One run). This isn't something that establishment people want to hear. It has also never been followed up by other creators–e.g. a modern day equivalent of Charley in Afghanistan or Iraq–which indicates just how escapist our industry has become. When graphic novels and a film like *Persepolis* are a commercial hit, and so the potential is there for successful innovation, I think that is regrettable... I also recognize that Charley's popularity is down to what I call mainstream readers–whose voices have not really been heard before *Crikey!*–and their recognition is most important to me. Thus you have an artist like Joe Colquhoun–probably one of the best British comic artists of the twentieth century (in my view, *the* greatest)- whose work had never been officially recognized by fandom during his lifetime or even posthumously. But if he'd drawn men in tights it would be another matter. I find that rather sad.

C: *How did* Action *come about, and why did it cause such controversy?*

P: It was the next step in the major changes going on. John had taken over as editor of *Valiant* and was trying to revive it. John Sanders had put me forward to the IPC as Managing Editor–they interviewed me but I didn't get the job. They were looking for a suit, a yes man and I think my radical ideas alarmed them. So John Sanders asked me to create a comic with a difference: *Action*, on a freelance basis.

Sanders was >

(BOTTOM RIGHT): KEN REID'S 'JONAH'. AS PAT RIGHTLY SAYS, A MASTERPIECE OF BLACK HUMOUR

(BELOW): MIKE WESTERN'S GRAPHIC DEPICTION OF HELL IN 'DARKIE'S MOB' (BATTLE PICTURE WEEKLY)

keen to make comics more adult, having seen the success of *Battle*, but there wasn't enough time to refine it. *Action* had a successful launch and then I moved onto *2000AD*. The guys who followed me didn't know when to put the brakes on and the comic paid the price.

C: *And* 2000AD*?*

P: Science fiction was a retreat–our critics couldn't attack us because we said it was robots getting blown up, not humans. Kelvin Gosnell had drawn Sanders attention to the forthcoming science fiction boom and so Sanders said that should be my next creation. I had time to get it right and an art editor called Dougn Church who was able to make fairly staid artists look exciting by laying out their pages in comprehensive detail. He sometimes dressed mutton up as lamb. The look was great and it worked.

AAAEHH
CAREFUL... DON'T KILL HIM... I WANT TO KNOW WHERE THE REST OF THESE BAD MISCREANTS CAN BE FOUND
AH YES A BITCH SLEPEM GIVES A KITH TO JUST ONE PUPPY
NOW! MY TRAINED ONE OF KEANOW WHERE ALL OF YOUR BROOD IS FOUND
TELL ME AND FROM THE DEATH IN BE SWIFT AND PAIN-LESS
CAN YOU AN OL KEEP A SECRET?
WELL SO CAN I
YES
WE'RE WASTING OUR TIME SO FOR THE HEART I'LL PLAY WITH HIS SPINE
AAAUUUGGH!

FINN, THE ECO WARRIOR WHO GRADUATED FROM A BIT PART IN CRISIS TO A STARRING ROLE IN 2000AD

C: *You left IPC to go freelance around the time* Misty *was launched. (Another title you had a hand in!). What prompted the move?*

P: John Sanders then wanted me to create a girls horror comic but I wanted a slice of the profits this time, when he turned me down I returned to freelancing. But I was still an adviser/associate editor of *Misty* on a freelance basis–the title, lead story (Moonchild) and format were mine. I wrote some of the earlier horror stories which I believed should be really scary and they were.

C: *You've never really left* 2000AD *behind. Lately, in fact, you seem to be more involved with the Galaxy's Greatest Comic than ever. Is it still your baby?*

P: I think the last era of Matt Smith's has been really excellent and *2000AD* has regained its old vigour and style, after a shaky period in the late nineties, so I'm delighted to still be a part of it.

C: *There have always been loose links between the strips you wrote for 2000AD.* Ro-Busters *begat* ABC Warriors *begat* Nemesis, *and now* Ro-Busters *are back in* Savage *of all places. Do you actually know how all this stuff fits together, if indeed it does?*

P: Yes, it does–see the latest *ABC Warriors* which shows a chronology. *Savage* was set in Volgan Wars, like *ABCs* so there had to be a link and modern robots in our world are not far behind *Ro-busters*, in fact some are maybe ahead. So it all seems logical to me

C: *And is Howard Quartz really Richard Branson?*

P: If he is, he won't be for long. I'm looking forward to the accident which will turn him into Mr. Ten Per Cent.

C: *Was Finn a reincarnation of* Slaine*, or just a pillock with a chip on his shoulder?*

P: Finn was an important character, a vigilante dispensing summary justice to eco-criminals with a pagan and esoteric philosophy. He seems to have been killed off by passive aggression within the comic establishment. He was never a reincarnation of *Slaine*, but according to the editor of *2000AD* in the 90s he was more popular than *Slaine* at that time.

(BELOW LEFT TO RIGHT). KEN REID'S FRANKIE STEIN, INVASION (ART BY JESUS BLASCO) AND THE RETURN OF BILL SAVAGE (ART BY CHARLIE ADLARD). (FACING PAGE,RIGHT) SLAINE AS DRAWN BY GREG STAPLES (MAIN ILLUSTRATION, BOTTOM) SLAINE'S SOFTER SIDE BY CLINT LANGLEY

Given *Slaine*'s huge success (The Horned God actually raised *2000AD* s sales) that wasn't bad going. "So should I bring him back," I asked. "No" was the reply. Even though he was popular, the editor printed negative letters which encouraged more negative letters, a policy he has acknowledged as pursuing, so the perception amongst the readers was that Finn was unpopular. Previously I'd only come across this kind of thing in a comic company in the States, which is big enough for editors to indulge in such personal issues, even at the expense of their own comics. In this instance, I think the reason was because I'd co-written Finn with a friend of mine, a flamboyant rock guitarist called Tony Skinner who was seen as far too exotic for the staid world of comics. He had also appeared from nowhere writing the number one story in *Toxic!* with me–*Accident Man*. And *Punisher 2099* for Marvel US which sold a million copies on issue one. All this without serving some kind of apprenticeship. I thought we were in the talent business, not in the civil service but as a guy from *2000AD* pointed out to Tony at the time, "You've got to pay your dues", whatever that meant. Bizarre. If you think that's eccentric, consider also the enormously talented artist SMS who I couldn't get more work after his run on *ABC Warriors*. SMS was that rare comic artist–a hard core science fiction artist with strong links to *Interzone* (that's where I had seen his work), and connections with top SF writers like Ian Banks who he had worked with, a really valuable find who could have taken *2000AD* in some interesting new directions. A criticism of SMS by editorial at the time–and said to me–was that he was too eccentric using a name made-up of initials! I thought the bad old days of comic conservatives were over after *Battle*, *Action* and *2000AD*, but it seemed I was wrong. Up to the millennium era, there had been a silent, slow and long term counter-revolution with the same attitudes, the same kind of people and the same kind of sabotage of anything or anyone 'eccentric'. 'Not one of us'. Only a little more subtle (if that's the right word) because by now I was known for speaking out and defending talented creators. Tony was a casualty of that counter-revolution. And SMS. I miss them both.

C: *After leaving IPC you worked on* Doctor Who Weekly. *You've had quite an enduring relationship with the good Doctor, haven't you?*

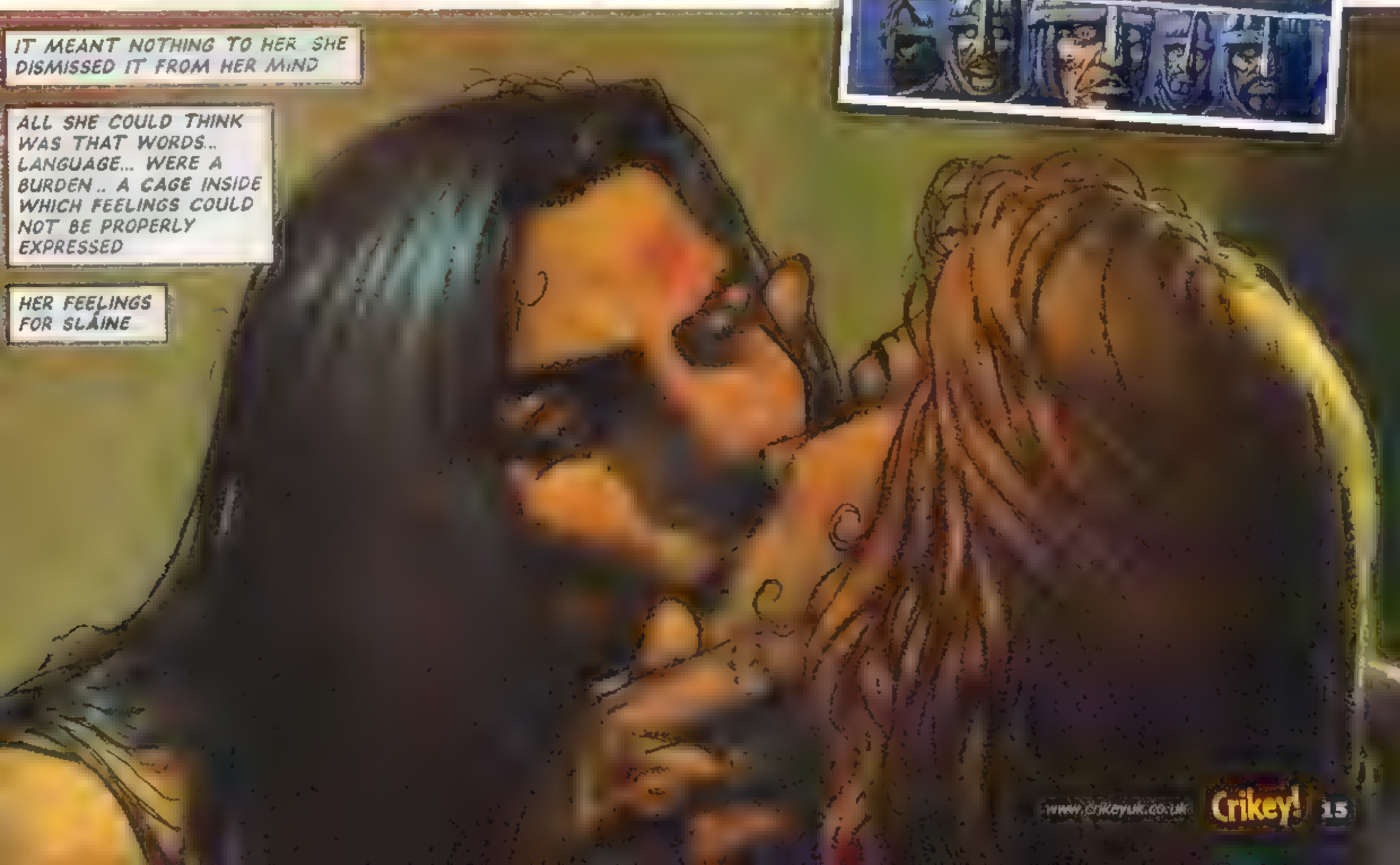
P: Yes, indeed!

C: *How did you end up writing the* Doctor Who *audios, and are there any more in the works?*

P: Alan Barnes script editor on *Doctor Who* had previously been script editor on the Megazine. He asked me to write an audio–that was *Dead London*. This was followed the next year by *The Scapegoat*, just out. They are just recording my third play–*Song of Megaptera*–this month.

C: *What about* Crisis, *how did that happen?*

P: Political comics were in vogue at the time and also adult comics–you have to remember there was a great deal of anger towards the establishment in the 1980s, whereas subsequently people lost interest/gave up/whatever. >


IT MEANT NOTHING TO HER SHE DISMISSED IT FROM HER MIND
ALL SHE COULD THINK WAS THAT WORDS.. LANGUAGE... WERE A BURDEN .. A CAGE INSIDE WHICH FEELINGS COULD NOT BE PROPERLY EXPRESSED
HER FEELINGS FOR SLAINE

So the *2000AD* editor Steve McManus asked me to do a political story which became *Third World War*. This was put back to back with *New Statesmen*, a kind of *Watchmen* style story. Strange bedfellows on poor quality paper, but despite this, *Third World War* survived it and lasted a good long while–it had an audience which included many readers who had previously never bought comics and possibly never did again. They were the readers I was especially after. The ones who don't relate to traditional comic fare. It certainly wasn't loved by super hero readers, but they weren't who I was interested in anyway and it worked pretty well for a while. There were changes of direction in *Crisis* because it wasn't a conviction comic at the top. So it lacked a theme. So various misguided professional fan boys would come along and try and persuade the editorial to turn it into *Vertigo*, or *Deadline* or a foreign comic compilation, rather than to recognize what it was and build on that. Why copy another successful publication–that never works. You have to believe in what you are doing. But if you don't then of course you are going to be swayed, and politics is still largely seen as a dirty word in British comics–despite *Charley's War*. This combined with changes of artists and story direction didn't serve it well; its strongest character Finn survived and it moved across to *2000AD*.

C: *And then* Toxic?

P: After *2000AD*, I had sworn never to create another comic–it was just so much agro and too much of a strain dealing with all the resistance, passive aggression and negativity from the establishment. So I stayed clear through *Diceman*, *Misty*, *Crisis* and then *Toxic*, agreeing to be just one of a group of creators. But somehow, for a while, when everyone dropped out, I seemed to end up practically running it. I'd say it had two key faults–it was two comics, half presided over by John Wagner and Alan Grant (*Bogie Man*); the other half presided over by me and Kevin O'Neill (*Marshal Law* and *Accident Man*). There was meant to be a unifying editor but that never happened. Readers can pick up a lack of theme or a lack of direction–see *Crisis*. The other problem was the publisher whom the comic establishment was hostile to. Whatever his faults, he gave us all a chance to do creator owned material, a tremendous achievement which needs recognizing, but I doubt it will be because he also was "not one of us". *Toxic* is a big subject and, like *Crisis*, I'd be more than happy to talk about in more detail on another occasion.

C: *Tell us what you're up to these days, aside from* 2000AD. *Some of your European work is about to finally appear in Britain for the first time, correct?*

(FACING PAGE, FAR RIGHT): PAGES FROM THIRD WORLD WAR. (FACING PAGE, BOTTOM): THE ABC WARRIORS (BELOW): AMAZING ARTWORK FROM 'REQUIEM VAMPIRE KNIGHT' BY LEDROIT (SEE CENTRE STRIP SECTION IN THIS ISSUE FOR AN EXCLUSIVE UK PREVIEW!)

P: Yes, I've always loved French books regarding them as the world leaders in comics. *2000AD* was very influenced by the French–see *Nemesis*, for instance. So I write several series for France, notably *Requiem Vampire Knight*–up to Volume 9 in France; and now published by Panini in the UK. Fabulous art by Ledroit, check it out and you may recognize a certain *2000AD* flavour to it

And–although it's only a six pager–I've just written a political story about the Iran elections for a comic out this Autumn. Beautifully illustrated by a superb artist!! Entitled the *Ayatollah's Son* it's the opening chapter called 'Stars' (see pages 74-77) of a possible graphic novel about a young rebel who falls out with his clerical father and joins the Iranian resistance.

In Iran, students get a star for drinking alcohol, having long hair, arguing, dancing, shagging etc. Three stars and you're expelled. The Ayatollah's Son has five stars. He is a dead man walking.

I have close connections to Iran, so this story means a lot to me. The story is true. I'm writing about real heroes and real courage, young men and women fighting for real freedom–it's also very funny, I think , because these are smart, funny, Iranian teenagers, just like all teenagers, bucking the establishment; but in Iran you can be whipped for drinking alcohol. So one teenager chews tobacco to hide the smell and when he breathes into an Ayatollah's face (actually called The Inquisitor) the Ayatollah snarls, "your breath smells like shit. Get out of here." The assumption that politics is boring or not entertaining is not the case, despite this generally held view in the comics establishment. This is pure *Charley's War* material.

C: *Do you think comics have a future in Britain? If so, what is it?*

P: Sure. The establishment was saying back in the 70s that comics were finished because they wanted them to finish. The kind of speeches I hear today about boys not buying comics anymore I heard back in the 70s, by the same kind of people. You only have to look at French comics, where French kids also have video games but the market is booming. If they ever fail here it will be because of a lack of talent, not a lack of readers. But it seems unlikely and graphic novels are doing well, so that's good news. I think the key is to have more than just super heroes. There's a market for everything, but all they do is ultimately boost the American market, not our own. It's called colonization.

C: *Lastly, if you could write the inscription for your own tombstone, what would it say?*

P: It would be too obscure and esoteric to include here, I'm afraid. ●

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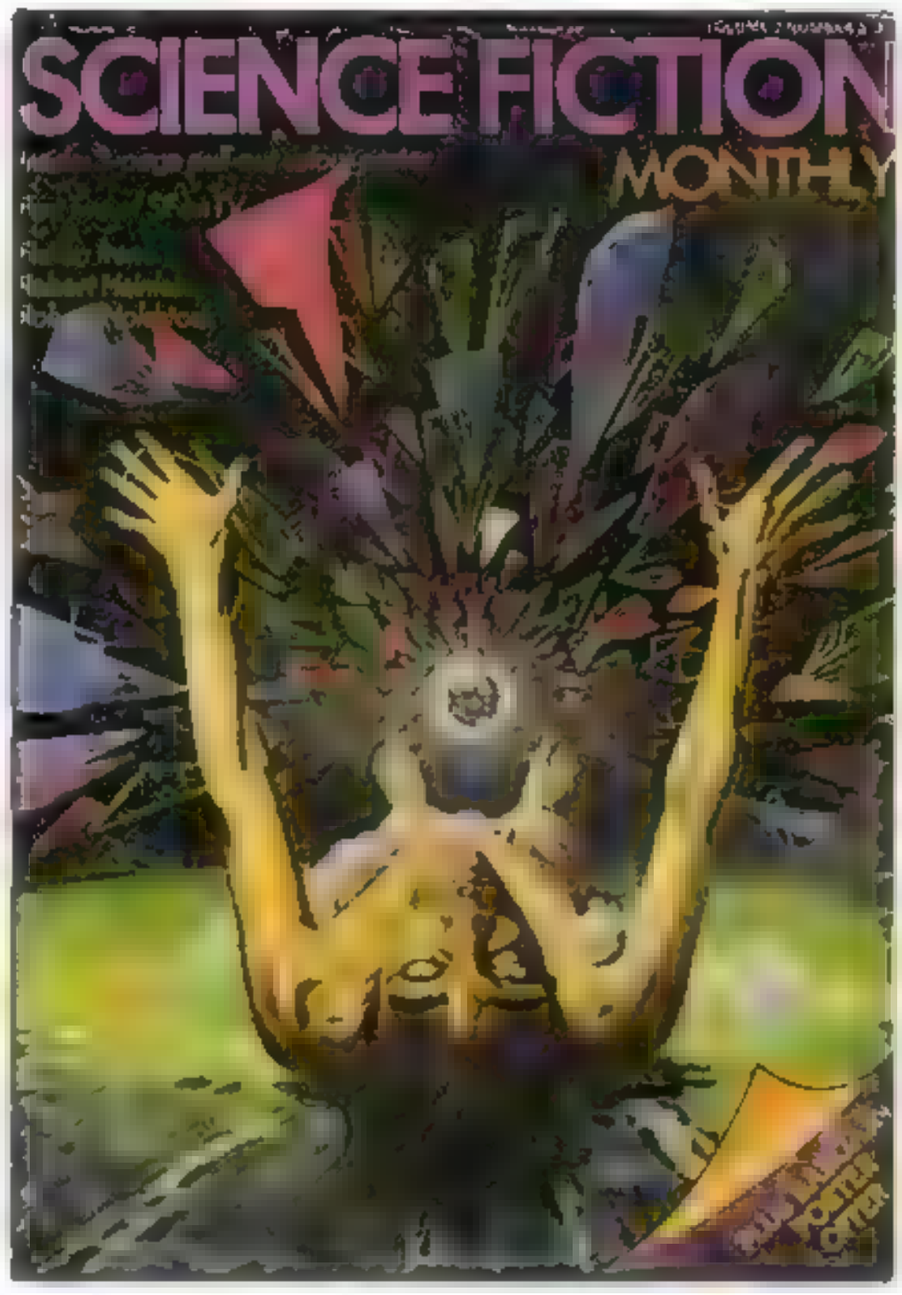
pulp rules OK!

In the first instalment of a two-part article **Justin Marriott** *makes the case for British comic's greatest innovators- paperback publishing house New English Library!*

Although I've been an avid reader and fan of this magazine from its debut issue, I've often commented to Crikey!*'s Commander-in-Chief that the featured comics and artists and the manner in which they were covered didn't necessarily resonate with my own memories of reading British comics.*

I was born in 1969 so the comics I avidly devoured growing up were the likes of 'Battle', 'Action' and '2000AD', titles which have received scant coverage in Crikey! *to date. Glenn's response was a logical one–he challenged me to stop my moaning and come up with an article myself ...*



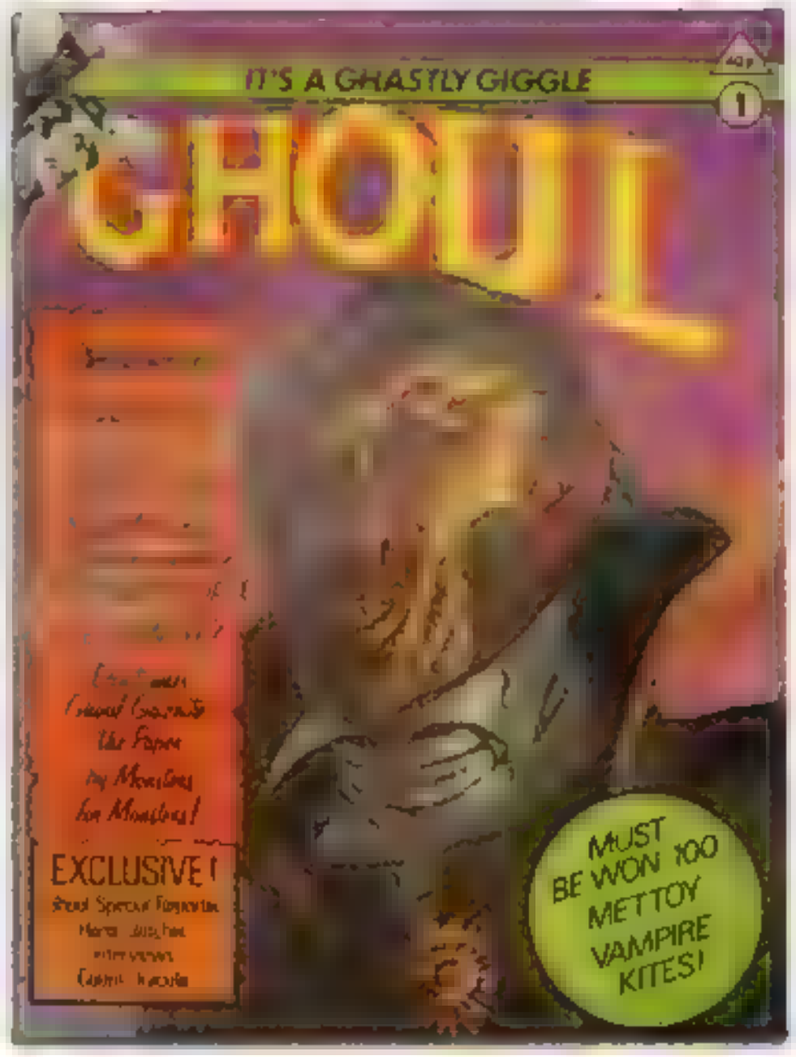
I have a confession to make. I don't really read that many comics these days and I certainly don't collect them. Instead I am a paperback fanatic, a creature that haunts dusty second-hand book-shops across the land in search of musty and yellowing pulps from the 1960s and 1970s. I seek out lurid stories of randy window-cleaners in bell-bottom jeans and pudding bowl hair-cuts, grizzled WW2 Stormtroopers wading knee-deep in gore and burnt flesh, motor-cycle maniacs and violent skinheads running riot in British sea-side resorts, and giant rats/crabs/insects (take your pick) feasting on intestines like sloppy spaghetti. And the paperbacks in these genres published by New English Library (NEL) in particular.

Hopefully you haven't stopped reading by now and will allow me

Before I get to the heart of the matter- which is to share my enthusiasm for 'Action' comic and its Kids Rule OK strip in particular-

the opportunity to expand upon why I see NEL as British comic's great unsung innovators in the first part of this article, and in the next part the parallels that I believe existed between NEL and the British comics industry, 'Action' in particular.

In the mid-1960s, publishers NEL (who had been known as Four Square) were financially on their knees, until Gareth Powell and a newly recruited Peter Haining set about reviving their fortunes. Haining had been a journalist at National Newsagent, a weekly trade paper in which he used his paperback review column to espouse upon what he saw as a lack of paperbacks aimed at teenagers. Powell agreed with



Haining and invited him to put his money where his mouth was by joining NEL and commissioning such titles.

With a keen eye on the trends of the day Haining did just that, developing paperbacks on subjects such as The Beatles and pirate radio, and books tying in with popular TV series such as 'The Man From U.N.C.L.E.' and 'Tarzan'. In search of new titles and ideas Haining would also regularly visit the West Coast of the US where many vibrant young publishers were thriving. A favourite of Haining's discoveries were the Ballantine paperback sized reprints of Mad, whose satire and irreverence encapsulated the vibe he wished to >

bring to NEL's youth titles. Although he could only agree a licence to distribute the Mad books in the UK, in the late 1960s Haining was inspired to pull together paperback collections of classic comics in the form of a series of reprints of Hulk, Thor and Batman. Could he claim to have invented the graphic novel? At the time the collections absolutely bombed and no further titles followed which was a major disappointment to Haining.

NEL would hold weekly brain-storming sessions where they would study news stories, box-office smashes, best-sellers and popular trends, then commission a team of efficient writers (many of them ex-journalists) to produce a book to cash in on such trends. Their most financially lucrative idea being a series of ultra-violent and black-humoured 'Edge' westerns in the tradition of the spaghetti genre which was pulling in the punters at the cinema. Clocking in 67 adventures, Edge was sold all over the world and only a silly mistake prevented a film being made of the character - the author sold the film rights to some chancer called Irving Allen in the mistaken belief it was Irwin Allen of Poseidon Adventure fame!

NEL also revitalised the horror genre which had lay dormant for years with the exception of the yearly 'Pan Books of Horror Stories'. Over a decade before the phrase "video nasties" was coined, NEL described their horror titles as "nasties" promoting the unprecedented level of sex and violence in titles such as The Rats and Night of the Crabs.

Possibly their most-remembered books came out a brain-storm where a member of staff who was a Chelsea fan mentioned a news story about skinhead hooligans causing trouble at football matches.

When a bona-fide skinhead who was then commissioned by NEL failed to deliver, Haining called in one of his hacks to deliver

Skinhead, which did exactly what it said on the cover. Followed by a dozen-odd sequels and a series of Hell's Angels pulps also offering a similar level of purple prose, these books sold in the millions at the time and are avidly collected to this day, often fetching silly money on generic auction web-sites.

NEL also published a number of magazines and comic books, which by their disposable nature were even more trend-led. Magazines on George Best, Bruce Lee, Johnny Cash, and Hell's Angels (often with totally made-up interviews and "facts") were churned out at an alarming rate. 'Science Fiction Monthly' (1973 to 1976) was published in an A3 broad-sheet format, mixing short fiction, reviews and massive full colour reproductions (minus intrusive logos) of cover art from SF books NEL were publishing. Undoubtedly designed to be disassembled and used for posters, the mags' approach to the art pre-dated the many fantasy art collections that were issued by the likes of Dragon's Dream and Paper Tiger in the 1980s.

'Edgar Rice Burroughs' (1975) and 'Ghoul' (1976) were a pair of one-offs of possible interest to comic fans. 'ERB' was also in A3 broad-sheet format with poster-sized reproductions of paperback cover art in addition to articles from noted author Michael Moorcock and his regular-collaborator fantasy artist Jim Cawthorn on Tarzan comic strip artists and the new film adaptation of The Land That Time Forgot. In age before the internet this publication contained ERB information that would have been a revelation to most readers. There was even an article on Burrough's westerns by horror author Guy Smith!

'Ghoul' was less successful, inspired by the humour employed by author Ronald Chetwynd-Hayes in his horror shorts (such as The Monster Club which was made into a dreadful film) it was a 'Famous Monsters' cash-in which combined quality short stories and articles with some truly appalling humour such as horror-scopes (geddit) and an interview with Dracula. Its' cover tag-line of "It's a

BRANDED
IN THE TWILIGHT WORLD OF INTERNATIONAL ESPIONAGE A NEVER-ENDING STRUGGLE EXISTS TO MAINTAIN WHAT IS KNOWN AS THE BALANCE OF POWER. MANY AGENTS OF THE WEST & EASTERN INTELLIGENCE NETWORK HAVE BECOME CAUGHT THEMSELVES TO LIVES OF ETERNAL DANGER, BUT THIS IS THE STORY OF JUST ONE OF THEM AN ENGLISHMAN. A MAN CALLED SIMON SHADOW
"THANK YOU - I HAVE BEEN SO NERVOUS THESE LAST FEW HOURS BY NOW MY SUPERIORS WILL HAVE HEARD OF MY DEFECTION
MY NAME IS SHADOW FOLLOW ME. I HAVE A CAR WAITING OUTSIDE
THIS TIME, HIS ASSIGNMENT SEEMED EASY TO MEET A DEFECTING SCIENTIST CALLED PAROVITCH AT LONDON AIRPORT AND ESCORT HIM TO INTELLIGENCE H.Q
NO DOUBT THAT IS WHY I HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO ESCORT YOU SAFELY TO HEADQUARTERS RELAX NOTHING WILL HAPPEN
THAT REFUGE TRUCK WHAT-? LOOK OUT
BUT SIMON WAS WRONG THREE MILES FROM THE AIRPORT IN A QUIET SUBURBAN STREET
THEY'RE ON TO YOU, PAROVITCH- FOR PETES SAKE MOVE!
ONLY ONE CHANCE STAY ON MY HEELS AND RUN FOR THAT ALLEY
BUT PAROVITCH WAS OLD AND TIRED EVEN AN INSTINCT FOR SURVIVAL COULDN'T GET HIM UNDER COVER IN TIME
AAAHH!
UUUH!

'BRANDED' FROM TARGET 15. ART BY R GARCIA

ghastly giggle" was only half-right.

'Dracula' (1972) was a short-lived but noble experiment to replicate the European approach to comics, utilising the very best reproduction values to show-case some fabulous Spanish material from the likes of Enric Sio, Jose Bea and Esteban Maroto. Weighing in at a relatively slim 20 pages but a hefty 13 pence price tag, the paper stock and colours were beautiful particularly compared to the bog-roll used by IPC and DCT, and acted as a fantastic showcase for the pop-art and design-led strips.

Based on the high cover price and reading the comic's editorials which referenced Lovecraft and underground comix, NEL were evidently aiming for a more sophisticated and adult audience for the comic. Despite lofty plans to issue hard-bound folders into which you could file your issues, the comic was cancelled after only 12 issues, although the ever resourceful

publisher rebound the unsold back issues into a 'Dracula Annual' which in itself is highly collectible. (By the way, Drag only ever appeared in a one-off strip)

Jim Warren of 'Creepy' fame did also issue a compendium of the strips under the title 'Dracula' (I've only ever seen it advertised in Warren horror mags so can't comment as to its content) and soon after Maroto began working in 'Vampirella' and at least one Sio strip was reproduced in the colour centre-pages of an 'Eerie', so I imagine the title was instrumental in bringing the Spanish artists to the attention of Warren and US audiences. Although I'm conscious I'm giving credit to NEL as trail-blazers for everything they did (Read how Peter Haining discovered gravity in the next issue) but when I recall >

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'Dracula' I can't help but think of the likes of 'Heavy Metal' magazine and its lush production values and sexually-charged material which would follow four years later.

I believe NEL also published a number of pocket-books in the style of 'Commando', although I don't have copies and these would have definitely been rip-offs of the 'Commando' formula. One very interesting NEL interpretation of a theme was 'Target' which ran for 50-odd issues (the last one I have is issue 50 and is dated 1972) and is not to be confused with another TV series based comic of the same title which would appear later in the decade. I believe 'Target' to be NEL's version of 'Look and Learn', the educational weekly which appeared to me at the time to be so dull and middle-class (not that I would have articulated in that way back then), not even The Trigan Empire could tempt me into reading it.

Although I was too young for 'Target' and have only become aware of it recently, it was evidently aiming at a market very different to that of 'Look and Learn', and one I would have identified with. Take issue 50 for instance, mercifully free from the wholesome educational content of 'Look and Learn', its cover carried a still from the new Hammer film Dracula is Dead and Well and Living In London (Christopher Lee contributed a weekly column as did Dave Lee Travis. Truly horrific!) with the contents including Part 2 of 'The Hitler Gang' featuring Rudolf Hess and a photo of a hanging victim of the SS, a study of ancient punishment including wood-cut reproductions of being hanged, drawn and quartered, a pin-up of a racing car, a soccer skills school and the Mau Mau cult were studied in 'Secret Societies'. Comic strips such as 'Bovver Boy' and 'L's Angels' rounded out the package for a publication aimed at teens!

NEL evidently intended 'Target' as a feeder mag into their paperbacks, often carrying one-sided reviews of the latest horror or biker titles, and centre-spread posters of their covers. I'll resist the temptation to now attribute 'Target' as the predecessor to 'Nuts' and the current "lads weekly" phenomenon, but the mixture of sports, outrageous photos and coverage of the latest films and music appears to be a formula as popular now as it was then.

Now I've finished attributing the invention of the printing press and penicillin to Peter Haining and NEL it's about time I pressed forward with my claim to parallels with this revolutionary publisher and the likes of Action. But that's next issue! ●

MEET THE KING OF THE MONSTERS INSIDE
No 37
TARGET
THE GREAT WEEKLY FOR BOYS
SUPER SKILLS this week GEORGIE BEST
pop special STATUS QUO
SCIENCE FICTION MONTHLY
LOST FOR GLORY
No 48
TARGET
I, WOLFF, SWEAR THAT I WILL TEAR DOWN YOUR MAGIC POWERS AND REND YOUR BODIES. WITH THESE HANDS I WILL DESTROY YOUR BODIES AND SOULS UNTIL YOUR SUBSTANCE NO LONGER POLLUTES THIS EARTH!

Albion

RETURN OF THE HEROES

BY TONY INGRAM

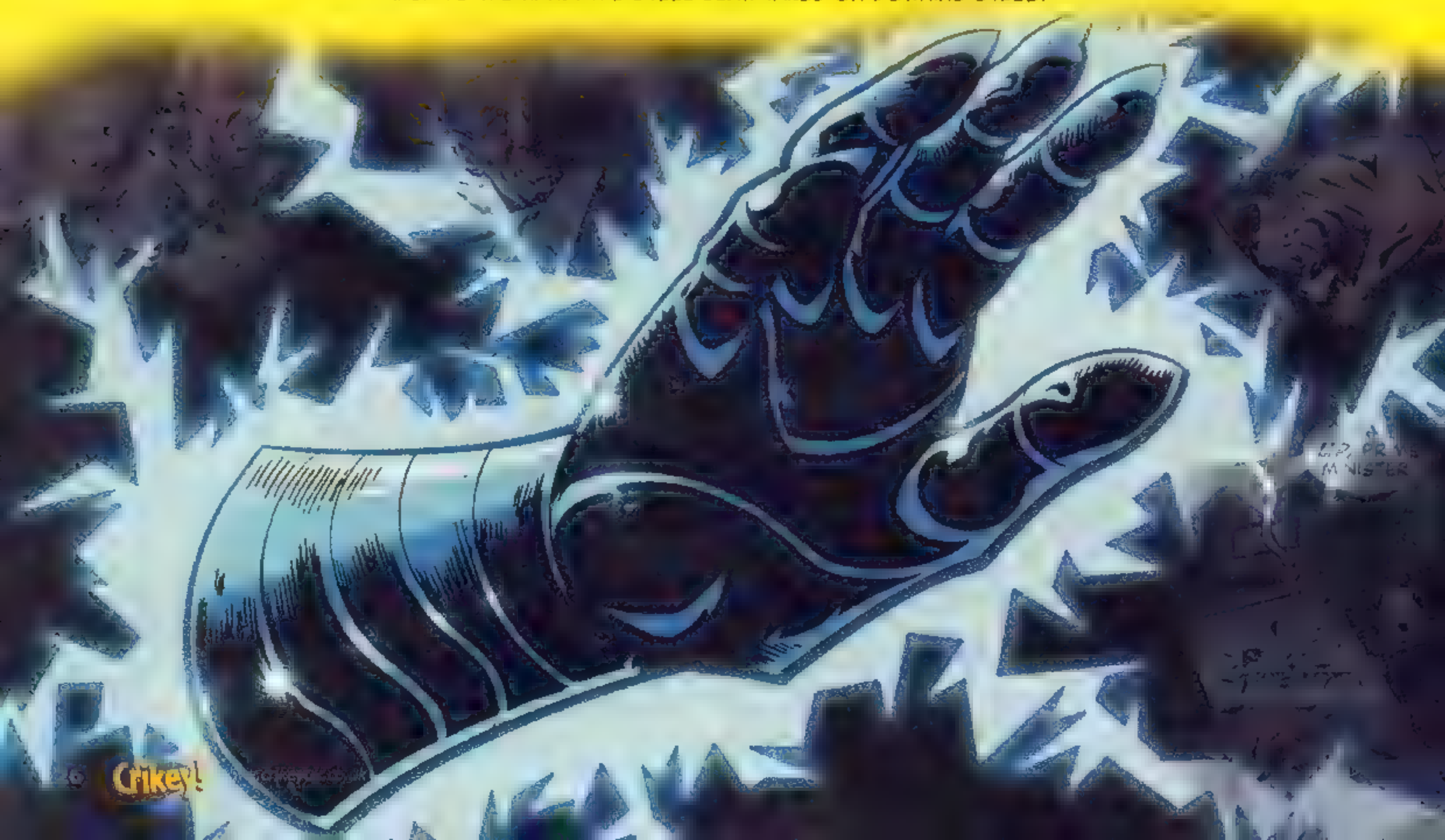
For decades, we thrilled to their unlikely adventures in the pages of Smash, Valiant, Buster and dozens more titles from the publishing giant that was IPC. Their names, while perhaps not as instantly recognizable to many as those of their garishly garbed colleagues from across the pond, were nonetheless legendary to those of us who knew and cared: the Spider, the Steel Claw, Kelly's Eye and a hundred more, freaks and weirdoes all in their strange, surreal worlds where mad scientists schemed and monsters roamed and the most likely reward for good deeds done was a huge plate of sausage and mash. They were odd, they were improbable, and in the case of some (like the Spider) you frequently weren't sure whose side they were on. But they had a quirky charm all their own which kept readers hooked. And then one day they were gone, and the comics with them. It didn't happen overnight, but it would be hard for most of us to say when that unsung golden age of curiously British heroes was truly over. It just ended when we weren't looking, most of us caught up in other things which seemed more important at the time. But they weren't forgotten.

In the late eighties Grant Morrison and Steve Yeowell created Zenith for 2000AD, a shallow, vacuous character reluctantly forced to become a superhero to fight off alien invaders. In the course of the series, Morrison had Zenith travel between the dimensions and encounter many characters from IPC's past, re-imagined. Later, in 1992 the 2000AD Action Special was published, featuring the likes of the Steel Claw and Cursitor Doom, and Tim Kelly of 'Kelly's Eye' fame resurfaced in 2000AD itself. It later transpired that 2000AD had mistakenly used these characters without authorisation: the rights now rested elsewhere. In more recent years, Paul Grist got around this problem by writing a host of curiously familiar characters with different names into his Jack Staff series.

And then came Albion.

Launched onto an unsuspecting world in August 2005, Albion was a six issue limited series from US

TALK TO THE HAND. THE STEEL CLAW TAKES ON DOWNING STREET



publishers DC Comics' Wildstorm imprint. Plotted by Alan Moore, drawn by Shane Oakley, inked by George Freeman, and written by Moore's daughter Leah and her husband and writing partner John Reppion, Albion is a strange beast indeed, a series published in America by an American company in the American format, but utilizing characters never previously seen in the US, a risky venture indeed for both DC and IPC Media. Would US audiences understand it? Would they know or care who these characters were? Come to think of it, given that most of them had been out of print for twenty years or more, would even British readers care? Luckily, the creators did not concern themselves with these trifling questions. Instead, they simply crafted a frankly bizarre but strangely compelling story and left it to the readers to work out. And the result is something that could well have been written for one of those old British titles, a dark and disturbing tale of what became of our childhood heroes after their time was up.

The premise of Albion is a simple but brilliant one: the

ABOVE: DAVE GIBBONS' CLASSIC COVER FROM THE ALBION TRADE PAPERBACK

BELOW: FREE AGAIN, A HOST OF CLASSIC CHARACTERS BREAK OUT IN ALBION #6

heroes of the comics were real, and they vanished because someone wanted them to. The story starts with a disillusioned young man named Danny, whose only interest in life seems to be old comics, realizing that newly convicted mass murderer Grymleigh Gartside Fiendstein is actually the old humour comics character Grimley Feendish. Yelling out the crook's name as he is transferred to a prison van, Danny is rescued from the attention of the authorities by the mysterious Bad Penny-a former Smash comic character who reveals that she is the daughter of Eric Dolmann, the robot maker from The House of Dolmann! Reluctantly forced to admit that this apparently deluded girl may be telling the truth when she first drags him off to Manchester to collect the remains of Robot Archie from a club and then introduces him to Togo (Dolmann's puppet sidekick), Danny finds himself involved in a quest to uncover the truth about the disappearance of Penny's father and the >

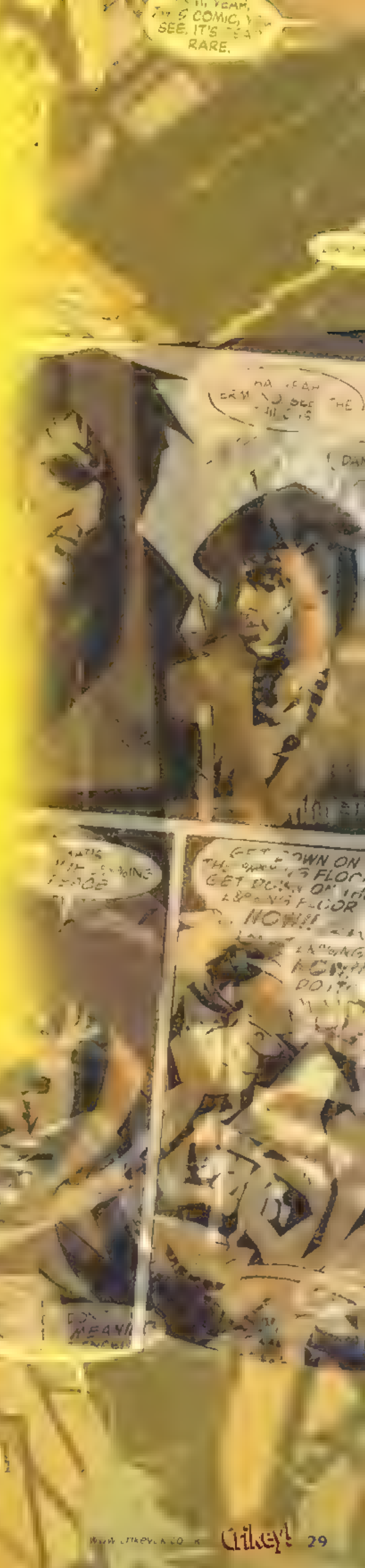
other characters, who were apparently captured and spirited away by the government years ago thanks to the treachery of the Spider. Meanwhile, American secret agent Zip Nolan has been sent to the top secret prison housing the comic characters (actually the Scottish castle belonging to the now comatose Cursitor Doom) in order to check that it is secure; naturally, his arrival coincides with an escape attempt (predicted by the computerized head named Brian's Brain, which is tied into the prison systems) orchestrated by the Spider, and also with a rescue attempt by Danny, Penny, the now repaired Robot Archie and Danny's local bookshop owner Charles Love-in reality time traveling Victorian criminal Charlie Peace-on board the Queen of the Seas! Chaos ensues...

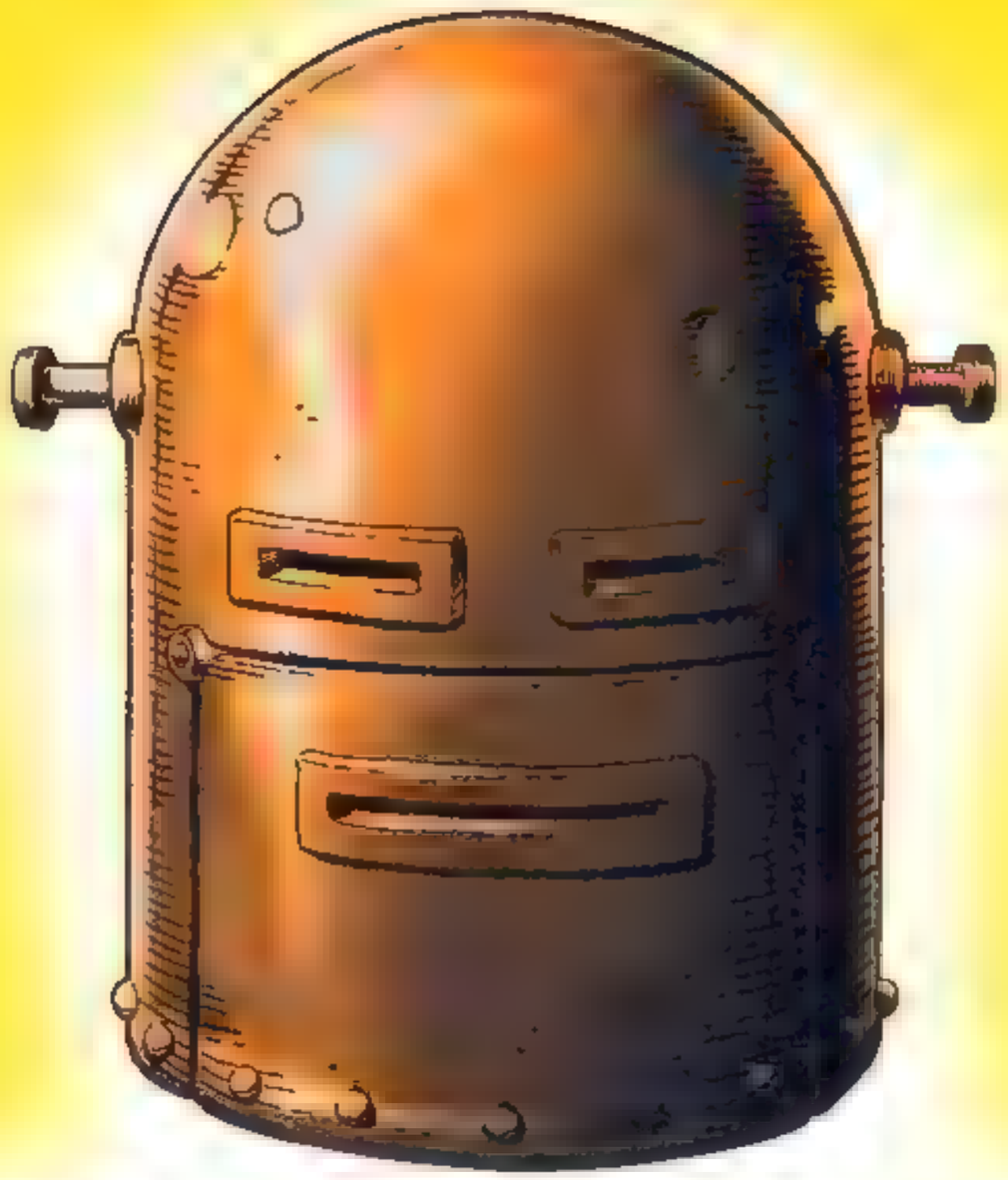
The story is complex and unfolds gradually over the six issues as we are drip fed information: the Spider was used by the government but locked up afterward because it was too dangerous to leave him free. Dolmann and the Tri-Man died in prison, the latter killed in an escape attempt. The weapons and gadgets of the comic characters (including Louis Crandall's Steel Claw, the Hand of Orloff and the giant robot ape Mytek the Mighty) are held in a huge secret vault beneath the prison, but Tim Kelly's invulnerability bestowing amulet, the Eye of Zoltec, is in the hands of the Prime Minister and was the reason Margaret Thatcher survived the Brighton bombing; without it, the once immortal Kelly has become a decrepit shadow of his former self. And the deranged Captain Hurricane, a voluntary inmate at the prison, was actually a failed attempt at creating a British super soldier, his batman 'Maggot' Malone really his handler. Other characters' identities become clear over time; prison warden Ian Eagleton was once Eagle Eye, junior Spy. Trustee Fred is actually Ken Reid's shape changing Faceache, his girlfriend Martina really Martha, she of the Monster Make-Up. The prison lab contains a man infested with parasitic creatures which are clearly the Nervs, while a test tube held for comparison holds a creature from a different host which is recognizably one of rival publisher DC Thomson's Numskulls! Other characters remain unnamed due to copyright issues, though there's an entertaining game to be played trying to identify as many as possible. Some are name-checked but not seen, like the briefly mentioned Captain Dare (what looks like Dan Dare's space helmet is held in the prison's armoury). At one point, Danny and Penny pass a shop-front with the name 'Anthony Broke, turf accountant' above it, a reference to long running humour strip Ivor Lott & Tony Broke. The prison graveyard boasts headstones bearing the names of Crabbe (Crabbe's Crusaders from Buster), Frederick Carno (Carno's Cadets), Brian Kingsley (the original owner of The Brain) and Joseph McClaine-rather an odd one; Joe McClaine was the real name of Joe 90, who had a long running strip in TV21. Tribute is paid to other non IPC characters too, as we see a

dismembered Brassneck (from the Dandy), Android Andy (the Robot Archie rip-off briefly glimpsed in Alan Moore's Captain Britain series) and one of TV's legendary Flowerpot Men in Penny's workshop, while the wrist mounted remote control unit belonging to the Beano's General Jumbo, the Green Cross Code Man's costume and even Baron Greenback's pet, Nero, from the Dangermouse cartoons are all held within the prisons vault. Even the writers of some of these bizarre creations get a look in, as we see old interview footage with Mike Higgs (creator of the Cloak) and Steve Moore, who informs us that everyone who worked at Odhams had to sign the Official Secrets Act. What's never explained is why the publishers were allowed to fictionalize accounts of these dangerous loonies' adventures in the first place. Dangerous is the word, too-these human (and occasionally not so human) oddities are not the innocuous characters they once were, whether because their earlier adventures were somewhat sanitized or because time and incarceration have changed them. Charlie Peace, here, is terrifying, much more akin to the real life murderer he was based on than Buster's cowardly thief. Faceache and Martha are genuine monsters whose eventual loving reunion involves them melting into an unidentifiable mass of writhing limbs and organs. And the whole thing ends in an orgy of violence as the inmates are unleashed on the world once more (though Robot Archie is seemingly destroyed in the process), the Spider strides off across the sea bed in the giant robot ape and Danny learns that he is actually Danny Doom, the amnesiac apprentice and heir of Cursitor Doom, who is himself whisked away into time by someone who appears to be Adam Eterno! No-one is left out, it seems! Finally, on a fittingly chilling last page, we see the Steel Claw break into 10 Downing Street to retrieve Kelly's Eye from a cringing Tony Blair. It's all wonderfully subversive. Just like the original comics, really...

The series was plagued by delays due to production problems and did not conclude until the end of 2006, more than a year after it began, but was collected as a trade paperback almost immediately afterward. The story is left wide open for a sequel, but unfortunately one has yet to materialize. Wildstorm did subsequently publish two more limited series' based on characters from the IPC back catalogue-Battler Britton, the World War II air ace more than done justice by Garth Ennis and Colin Wilson, and the all but forgotten Thunderbolt Jaxon reinvented by Dave Gibbons and John Higgins, both in 2006. But since then, nothing further has materialised. It appears that for now, what Grimley Feendish refers to as 'these wonderful freaks' have returned to languishing in comics limbo, waiting for the next time they'll be let loose to cause their peculiarly British brand of havoc yet again.

Let's just hope that time isn't so long in coming, this time... ●





LEAH MOORE & JOHN REPPION

INTERVIEWED

Crikey!: *So, probably a stupid question to ask, but are you both longtime comics fans?*

Leah Moore: I am yes, I was always given comics by my Nan on a Saturday, so I grew up on *Pippin* and *Buttons* and *Twinkle* and then later *Buster* and *Beano* and all of those. Obviously I had comics around me at home too, I had *Asterix* and *Tin Tin*, *Scrooge McDuck*, *Peanuts*, all kinds of great stuff that was really different to the British comics I got regularly. As I grew up I began to read more and more of the other comics around the house, and pretty much devoured anything I liked the look of. I think I was very much guided by whether I liked the art, before I would give the stories a chance, and I think that's possibly still true today. I used to draw my own strips out right from when I was small, I had a superhero team which I did three issues of and sold to anyone who came near to the house. Comics were something I was very, very familiar with and were really cosy for me. They still are really, seeing

(ABOVE): SO THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED TO 'PINKY & PERKY'...

classic covers really takes me back to being small, not as an avid collector or anything, just as the background to my life.

John Reppion: I was brought up reading British humour comics – specifically *The Beano* which I got weekly for many years but also *The Dandy*, *Beezer*, *Whizzer & Chips*, etc. I used to get a lot of annuals at Christmas and buy all the little digest sized specials they put out in the summer holidays. My dad used to work in an indoor market and there was a stall there that sold second hand books and also had stacks of old comics. I remember buying battered copies if *Vulcan* and *The Brave and the Bold* and loads of other stuff there for just a few pence. Then, around 1990, my uncle Martyn lent me *The Killing Joke*, *The Dark Knight Returns* and *Digital Justice*, all of which set me onto buying *Batman* monthly. Comics were quite cool at the time and I remember picking up a few issues of *2000AD* and Marvel's *Strip!* but not really being very taken with either of them (apart

from the *Death's Head* stories). Of course, I invested in some *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* collections too–this being the 1990s. For years I used to copy panels from books and sometimes even try to draw my own stories but my interest petered out as I got more interested in girls and guitars (or 'hit puberty', I suppose). After that, to be perfectly honest, I didn't really get back into comics until found myself suddenly co-writing them.

(BELOW): PRIME MINISTER MARGARET THATCHER, KELLY'S EYE AND THE GRAND HOTEL, BRIGHTON, OCTOBER 1984

OCTOBER 1984
YOU REMEMBER THAT THE IRA BOMB AT THE GRAND IN BRIGHTON.
THEY WERE TRYING TO GET THATCHER
AND THERE SHE IS, THE SAME DAY, FRESH AS A DAISY
THIS IS FOOTAGE TAKEN BY A FREE REW AS HE ARRIVED ON THE SCENE
THE MAN ON THE RIGHT IS LORD BUTLER MARGARET'S SECRETARY
EVERY OTHER COPY OF THIS HAS BEEN DESTROYED OR ERASED OR WHAT-EVER
WHERE'S JELLYBABY'S HERE!
AT THE CENTER
THE FUSE

C: *What made you both decide to get into comics writing and how did you break in? Tell us a bit about your early careers.*

Leah: I was working a fairly boring job, and not really thinking about a career at all, just drinking my wages and having fun as you do, and then my dad suggested I try writing a comic. I was surprised by the suggestion, but it intrigued me, and it was kind of a challenge, to see if I could come up with a strip by myself, and see if it hung together as a proper story. I did an eight page *Tom Strong* story called 'King Solomon Pines' and dad suggested I send it in anonymously to Scott Dunbier at *Wildstorm*. I did and it was accepted and I got my first taste of being paid to do something fun. I did another eight-pager, and then Scott said he was setting me some homework, and that I was to come up with an original six issue series pitch. I started thinking, and by that time me and John were living together so it was natural for us to start bouncing ideas around and talking things over together. It took us ages to come up with the whole pitch, almost a year I think, but by the time it was done, we were really pleased with it, and we had written the pitch together the whole way through. I knew we would work better as a writing team than either of us could do on our own, and we decided to ditch our jobs and go for it writing full time together. Financially it was madness, but I know we wouldn't have found the time to write comics around our day jobs, even with the best intentions it just wouldn't have happened. We needed the clean break to propel us forward.

C: *Where did the initial idea for Albion come from; I seem to recall reading a couple of years ago that it was initially Shane Oakley's idea, is that right? How did you end up writing it?*

John: Shane and Alan had been looking for a project to work on together for a long time–years and years–and then Shane suggested doing something with all these out of copyright British characters. They talked about it a bit, Alan came up with some ideas and then got in touch with *Wildstorm* to see if they'd be interested in the project. Apparently, simultaneously, Andrew Sumner of IPC had stumbled across the fact that the company still held the copyright to a lot of classic British characters and contacted his good friend Bob Wayne at DC Comics about the possibility of cross-licensing them. So, it all seemed a bit like fate really. Alan was so busy writing the whole >

(BELOW): DON'T MESS WITH ROBOT ARCHIE–THE BEST OF BRITISH BRASS

ABC universe that he didn't feel like he had enough spare time to devote to a whole new series so he asked Leah and I if we'd do the writing working from his plot (just as writers like Peter Hogan were doing with some other ABC titles). Naturally, we jumped at the chance.

C: *Alan's name is plastered all over the book, which I guess was inevitable from a marketing point of view, but* Albion *doesn't 'feel' like an Alan Moore story. How much input did he have into the finished work?*

Leah: He plotted it completely and right at the outset too. We basically took a heap of notes from him about what happened in each issue and then as we were writing the issues we'd discuss them with him a bit as we went, but to be honest we were just writing from his plot notes from our first conversation about it. There were things we had to work out in terms of timings and locations and stuff, where we had to know where the various characters would be at a certain point or whatever, but for the most part we were just following orders! He had the final edit on the script, especially the dialogue. It doesn't really feel like an Alan Moore book, but looking back at it, it kind of doesn't feel exactly like a Moore & Reppion book either. It's an odd fish really!

C: *How did you decide which of the fairly vast potential cast of characters available to use? Was it personal choice or dictated by rights issues?*

John: Alan already knew which characters he wanted to use and we all had our favourites we wanted to squeeze in. We didn't worry too much about the rights so much because Alan was already well versed in getting round that sort of thing with League. There were some characters who we wanted to use that got written out however; Were Wilf, for

(BELOW): AN UNEXPECTED CAMEO FROM MIKE HIGGS. (BELOW RIGHT): LEAH. (FACING PAGE). JOHN, AND THE COVER TO ONE OF THEIR MORE RECENT PROJECTS

ERM, LOOK, NO OFFENSE OR NOTHIN' BUT YOU'RE NOT LIKE, A NUTTER OR SOMETH NG, ARE YOU?
I WAS A HUGE FAN OF COM CS, I PUT ALL THE N-JOKES INTO THE CLOAK TO MAKE OTHER FANS LAUGH.
SHUT UP AND WATCH.
I JUST ENJOYED THE IDEA OF OTHER PEOPLE READING IT.
BRITISH FANDOM WAS JUST STARTING UP, V'KNOW? PHIL CLARKE AND EVERY-BODY.
YEAH, IT WAS A LOT OF FUN TO DO.
WHAT ABOUT THE RUMORS THAT THE CLOAK WAS ACTUALLY BASED ON A REAL PERSON?
CAN WE TURN THAT TH NG OFF NOW?
MIKE HIGGS

example, featured quite heavily in an early draft of the story.

C: *A lot of the characters are not immediately recognizable and their identities only become clear as the story progresses. Many are never explicitly named. Was that deliberate, and do you think it helps or hinders the story? I'd imagine many American readers were somewhat confused ..*

Leah: Well as John says, we were partly using analogues of characters, partly using IPC characters, but really obscure ones from all kinds of different stories, and partly just things Shane threw in as he was drawing it. The result is kind of British comics muesli which it is almost impossible to recognise every character in.

It was successfully and thoroughly annotated online by Damian Gordon (*www.comp.dit.ie/dgordon/albion*) (*www.comp.dit.ie/dgordon/albion*) with help from many Albion readers who would add their own theories and identifications to the lists he was compiling. It turned into a bit of a race to identify as many as everyone could before the annotations went up. Obviously our American readers would have had a harder time doing this than the British fans, but to be honest, it is a British comic, about British characters, written and drawn by British creators. The whole point of it was the fact that all those comics had been dropped and all those characters had been left to moulder for twenty years. If the characters are obscure its not our fault, it's the 1970's comics industry for ditching them all in favour of the muscle bound guys in tights imported from the USA. All that said we get just as much positive feedback from American readers, and even younger readers who find the idea of this whole world of comics that they know nothing about really interesting and charming.

C: *Were you aware that* 2000AD *had* *(without authorization, as it turned* >

out) briefly revived Kelly's Eye *and several of the other characters and concepts in* Albion *in the 90s? There are similarities in tone, it seems to me, between their rather grim updating of the characters and yours, though the* 2000AD *version definitely lacked the 'fun' element in* Albion. *Did you read any of that stuff?*

John: We knew about the *2000AD Action Special* and of, course, about Paul Grist's Jack Staff but we deliberately d dn't read them because we didn't want our series to be influenced by any previous re-imaginings of the characters. We tend to always avoid any comics that are in any way similar to something we're working on for the same reason. We'd read that people had reacted quite badly to Mark Millar's rather nasty version of *The Spider* and we definitely wanted to keep the whole thing a bit more cheerful than that. We tried to maintain what we felt was the spirit of the original comics but make it all a bit more contemporary and yeah, we wanted it to be fun.

C: *Who was responsible for all the little nods to characters who were not principals in the story–stuff like the headstones in the graveyard and Tony Broke's name appearing over a bookmaker's shop? Were they concocted by you two, or by Shane?*

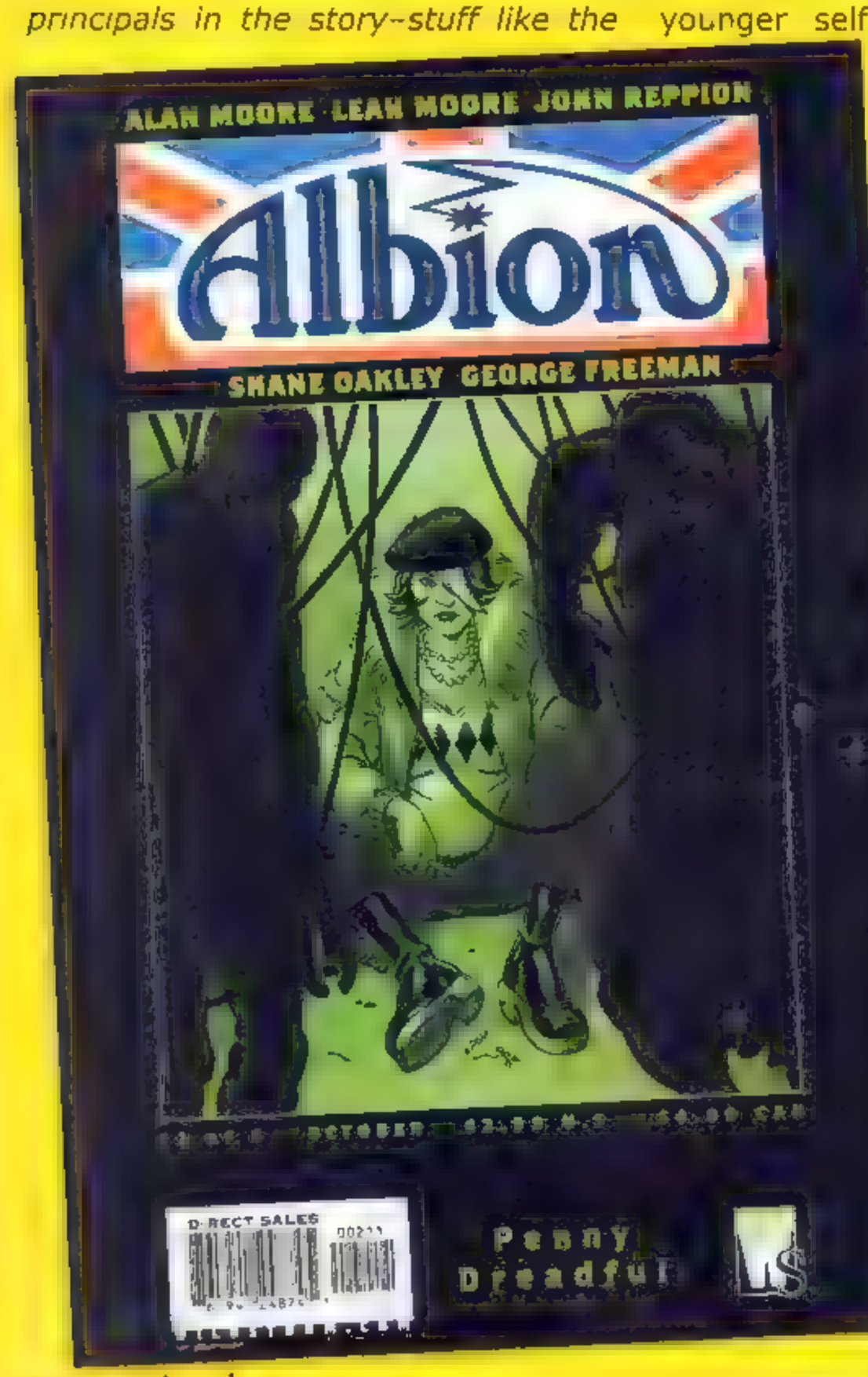
Leah: Some were requests of ours, but to be honest more often than not it was Shane's encyclopaedia brain ticking over and putting them all in. Shane has all of it stashed away in his head, so that's where much of the nodding and winking came from. Of course sometimes he put in people who nobody was ever going to recognise, like his father-in-law for example . but yes, mostly Shane you have to thank for the texture!

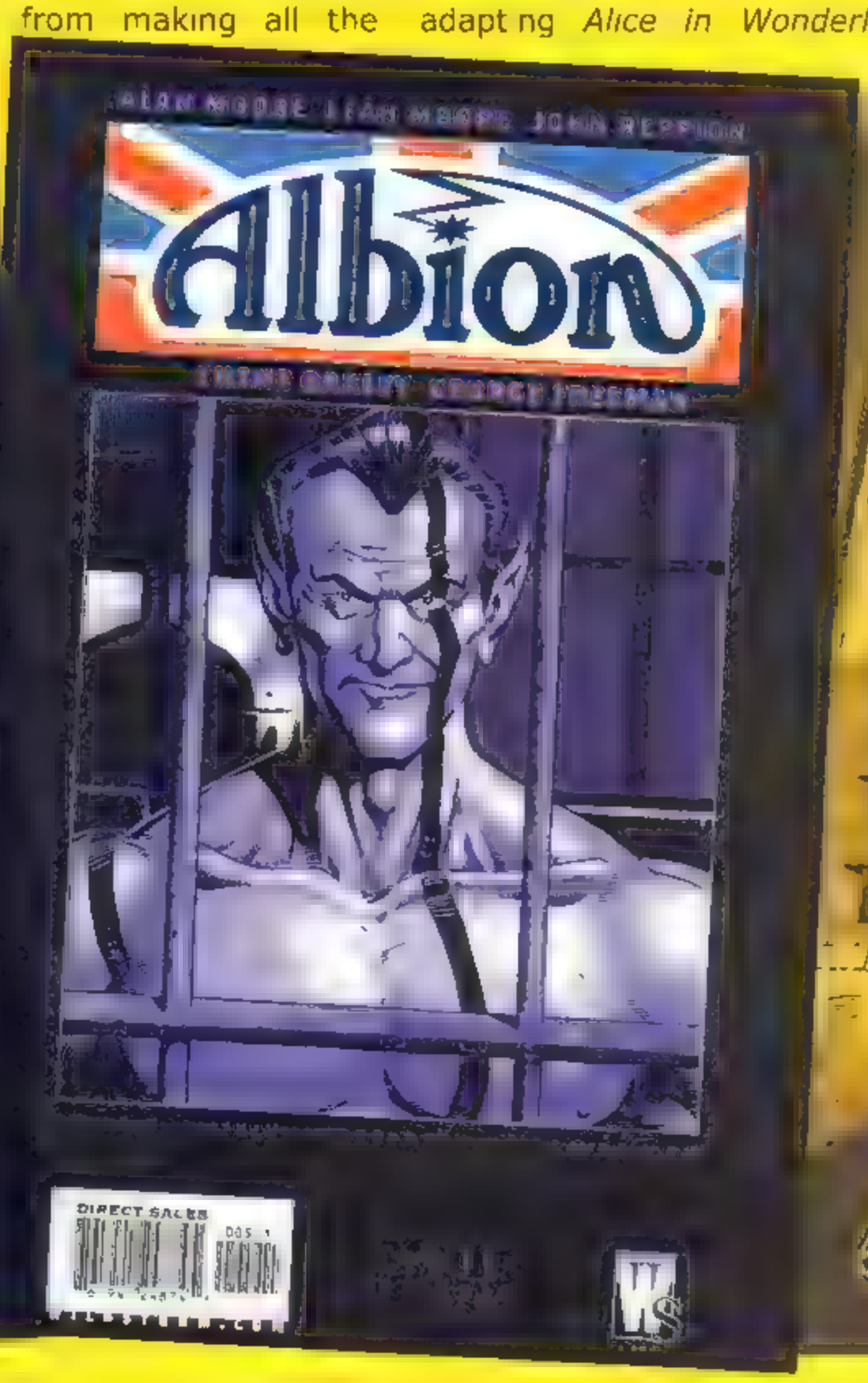
C: *The story has a very open ending. Were there ever plans for a sequel?*

John: We pitched for a sequel, a couple in fact but there were a lot of changes going on at *Wildstorm* at the time (not least Alan's *ABC Apocalypse*) and, for whatever reason they never got picked up. One was called Time Peace and was all about, Charlie Peace travelling back to the Victorian age with the help of Brian's Brain and Cursitor Doom's magical watch in order to try to stop his younger self from making all the mistakes he made. It was going to be like *Back to the Future* but with loads of biographical stuff about the real Charlie Peace and lots of other stuff going on in the present which might help or hinder Mr. Peace's mission. The other one was a full blown House of (Penny) Dollman vs The Spider story set mainly on a remote island (and this was before Lost) – Mytek was in the mix too and it would have been lots of fun. Steve Moore pitched for a series which was all about Danny Doom and Grimly Feendish and I seem to remember that Neil Gaiman wanted to have a crack at Feendish too. Shame none of it ever happened really.

C: *Tell us what you've been up to recently. You wrote a Doctor Who a few months back for IDW. Any more of those in the works? And you're still working on new projects for* Dynam te Entertainment, *I gather?*

Leah: We have told IDW that we are always up for doing more Who stories, as it was loads of fun to write, but at the moment we are just plugging away at the mountain of stuff for Dynamite! We are currently adapt ng *Alice in Wonderland* and





Through the Looking Glass into a four part miniseries which is being drawn by the amazing Mangaka Erica Awano, and looks gorgeous from what we've seen already, we are proofreading and approving issues of *The Trial of Sherlock Holmes* which is up to #4 as I type this, so issue #5 should be out by the time this is being read. There's also the Dracula adaptation coming out too, issue #3 should be out by the time this sees print, and of course Dracula and Sherlock Holmes are both being collected into hardback editions with lots of extras in the back of each volume, and I think they come out in October, so we are looking forward to that. The other main project we are working on together is that I am expecting a baby in early November, so it's a race to get everything sorted before the baby arrives!

C: *I know the field is somewhat limited now, but any plans to work on an actual British strip in Britain? For* 2000AD *or the* Megazine*, perhaps?*

John: We'd really love too but Dynamite keep us so busy we never get the chance to pitch for anything (not that we're complaining). We also have our first kid on the way so there's no huge vista of free time opening up any time soon We're mates with people like Leigh Gallagher, Al Ewing and PJ Holden who are all *2000AD* regulars and we'd love to have a crack ourselves but, sadly, it's probably not going to happen any time soon. That said, if they approached us with something I think we'd have a hard time turning it down.

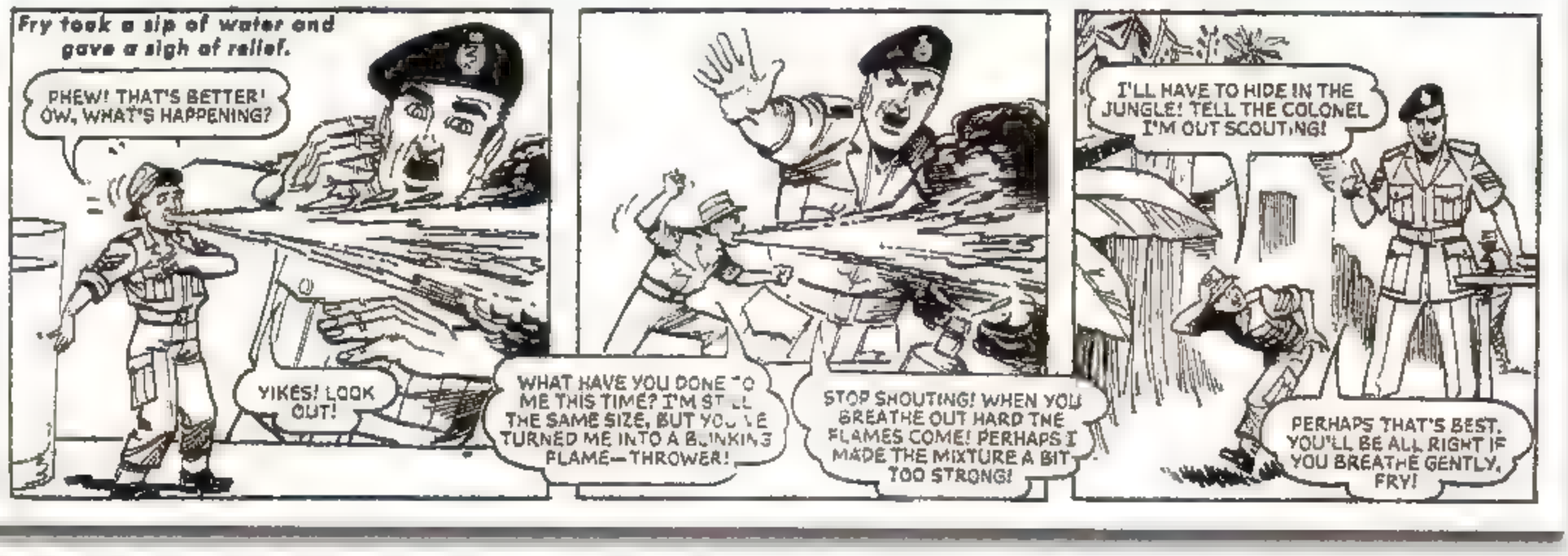
C: *The industry is not what it was, certainly in Britain and increasingly not in America either, it seems. What do you think is the future of the comics industry? Does it have a future? And what do you see yourselves doing ten years from now- still writing comics?*

Leah:I think people have been saying that comics are declining since there have been comics. It's a small industry so whenever a new technology comes along, someone will think "oh my god this is it we are doomed!" but to be honest, comics is a really flexible medium, and people are still doing new and interesting things with it. I think that the desire for artefacts, paper comics you can hold in your hand will only grow in an increasingly digital age. Bookshops are increasingly selling trade paperbacks now, and to be honest, when we talk about the industry, for the most part we mean the US and UK industries. This totally ignores the entire European scene, where each country has an individual thriving comics industry; each with their own celebrities and family favourites, not to mention the Japanese industry, the South American market, the Indian market, which is huge, the list goes on. I think that only thing really threatening the US and UK industries right now is a blinkered approach to comics, and which comics should be made. With a bit more of an open minded approach, I don't see why comics couldn't be bigger than it is now in ten years time. The only limits we have are our imagination, and unlike Hollywood we don't have to spend millions to realise our imaginings, it's all there on the printed page. ●

ART BY THE ONE AND ONLY DAVE GIBBONS

NUTTY NOTIONS

Each issue of *Crikey!* features a selection of some of the lovingly bizarre concepts that have graced the pages of British comics in years past. Once again *Tony Ingram* proves that he has read way too many comics in his time... *Ideas and nominations for future Nutty Notions gratefully accepted through the* Crikey! *website (www.crikeyuk.co.uk), click 'contact' and away you go! Enjoy!*


Fry took a sip of water and gave a sigh of relief.
PHEW! THAT'S BETTER! OW, WHAT'S HAPPENING?
YIKES! LOOK OUT!
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO ME THIS TIME? I'M STILL THE SAME SIZE, BUT YOU'VE TURNED ME INTO A BLINKING FLAME-THROWER!
STOP SHOUTING! WHEN YOU BREATHE OUT HARD THE FLAMES COME! PERHAPS I MADE THE MIXTURE A BIT TOO STRONG!
I'LL HAVE TO HIDE IN THE JUNGLE! TELL THE COLONEL I'M OUT SCOUTING!
PERHAPS THAT'S BEST. YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT IF YOU BREATHE GENTLY, FRY!

CORPORAL FRY (HE'S ONE FOOT HIGH) (HOTSPUR, 1970) ART BY BOB WEBSTER

I could write a book full of NN's just based on a years' worth of stories from Hotspur! This one concerned one Corporal Fry, in command of a British army patrol detailed to keep the peace in Kokaland, who is reduced to the stature of a young Ronnie Corbett by an irate witch doctor! Cue endless misadventures as resident boffin Sgt Jones attempts to find a cure for Fry's curious condition and restore him to regulation height! It takes a big man to maintain discipline under adverse conditions such as those. Which is probably why Fry never had a hope of doing so.

THE MISSING LINK (FANTASTIC, 1967. ART BY: LUIS BERMEJO)

Introduced in the first issue of Odhams' 'Fantastic' on 18th February 1967, the Link was originally a caveman like creature of unknown origin who lived on the aptly named 'Dead Mountain'. Brought back to civilisation after an encounter with the unscrupulous hunter 'Bull' Benson, this blatant rip-off of the Incredible Hulk had a number of unlikely adventures over the first four months of the comics run, but was not a hit with readers. So in a rather strange move, rather than simply replace him, Odhams had him wander into a nuclear reactor and emerge mutated into a super-intelligent costumed hero called Johnny Future! Still less than original, and demonstrating more or less random super powers according to who was writing him that week, Johnny was not a success either and was gone by the end of February 1968, but returned briefly in the 1969 Fantastic Annual.. Perhaps mercifully though, the mixed up Mr Future hasn't been seen since.

A special *Crikey* thanks goes to Ray Moore for giving us some ate information regarding last ssues Nutty Not ons Bucktooth was drawn B Ho royd Shocker Jock by George Drysda e Wee Hi Jo by Ph Mclar and Pete s Pockets by Steve Maher thanks Ray!

THE JUNGLE FROM NOWHERE (HOTSPUR, 1970) ART BY JAMES BLEACH

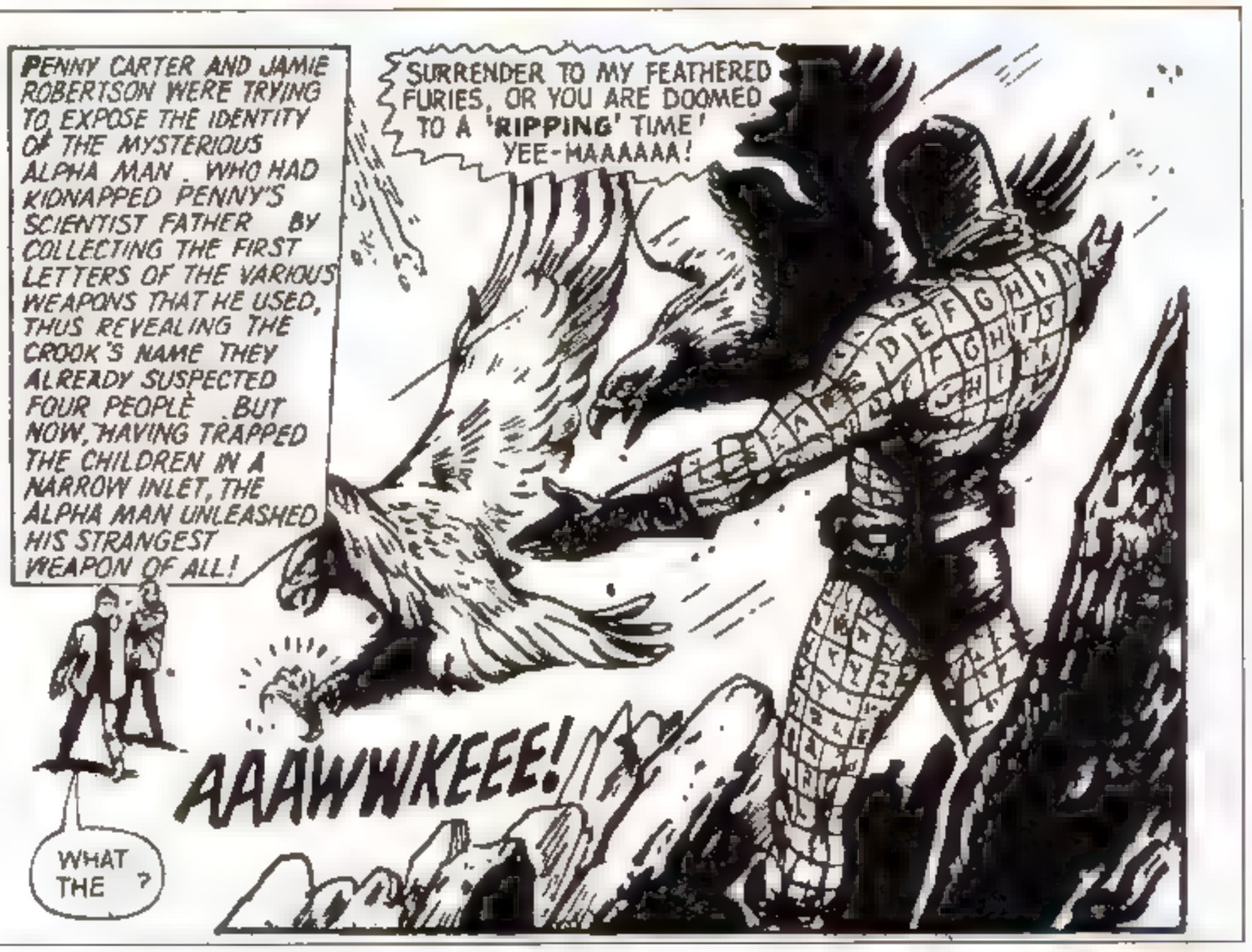
Another unlikely adventure from the pages of Hotspur, this one saw Sgt Joe Brent and his crack team of jungle explorers taking on Chief Alibob and his Borneo born barbarians in the wilds of a jungle full of huge wildlife which had unexpectedly appeared on the Welsh border. Just to complicate matters all the more, later Joe learned that the mysterious radiation which had caused the freak growth in the plants and animals was also going to affect him and his men! Well, we've all had weeks like that, right?

THE YOUNG ACES OF SPACE (HOTSPUR, 1970) ART BY MIKE WHITE

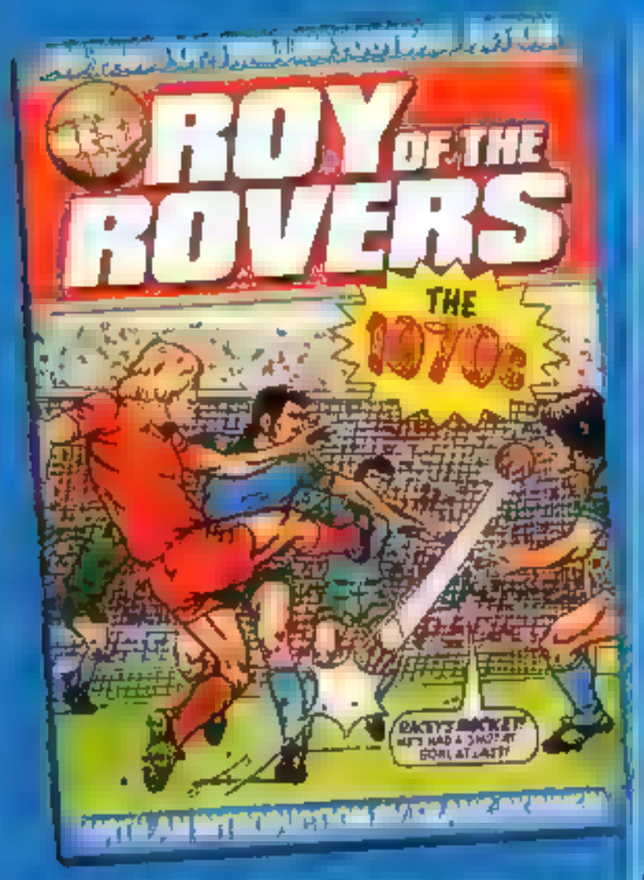
Tommy Tomson was just an ordinary lad working for Huggins the grocer, until he was unexpectedly offered a place at a new 'Space School' for trainee astronauts by one Professor Robson! Of course, Tommy proves to be a natural pilot despite his background being in cabbages, which is just as well given how lax the school's entrance policy seemed to be. They sent the poor sod up in a plane on his second day! Nowadays of course, Health & Safety would have a field day. Hardly surprising our space program never got off the ground, really... ●

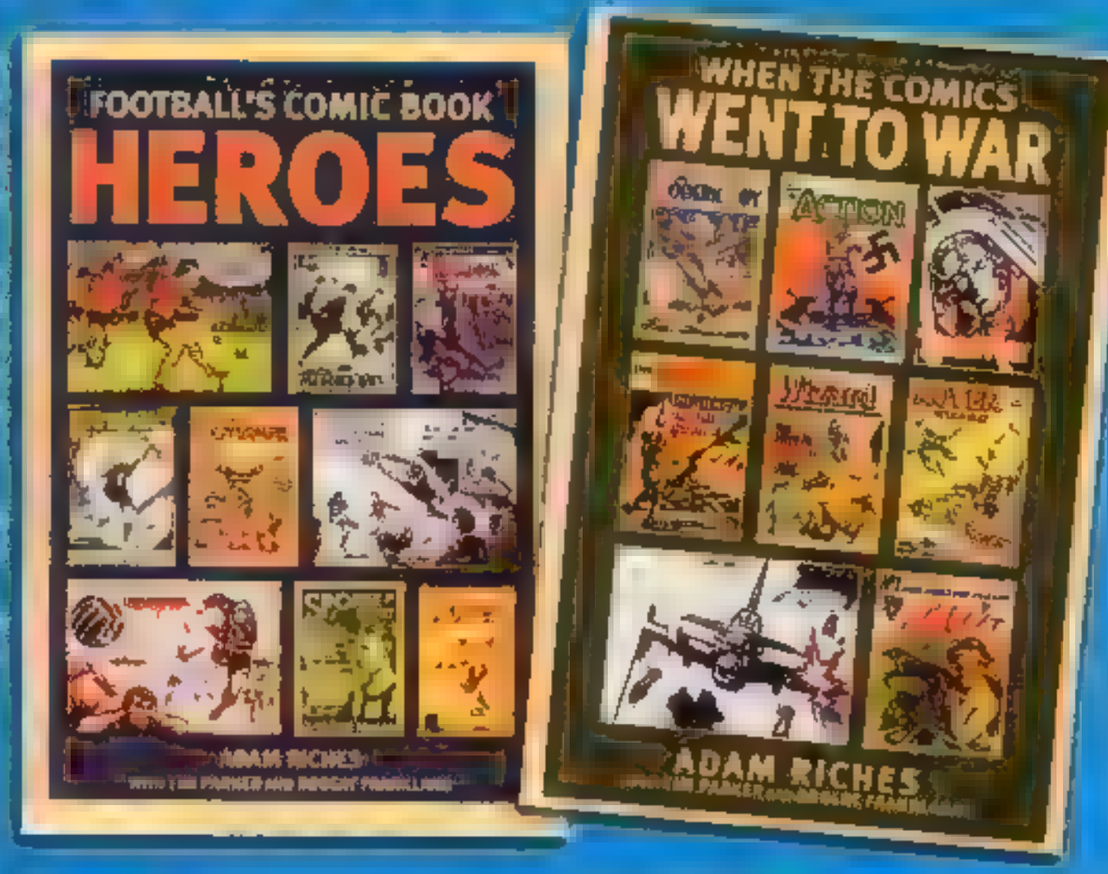
THE MENACE OF THE ALPHA MAN (CHEEKY WEEKLY, 1979) ART BY ERIC BRADBURY

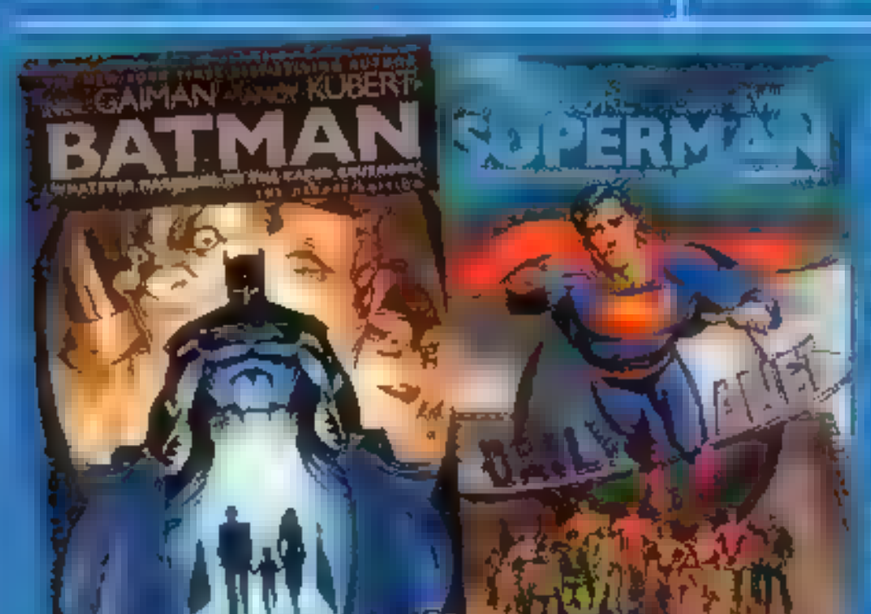
The Alpha Man was a mysterious, masked villain in a costume covered in letters who kidnapped the scientist father of young Penny Carter. Penny and her friend Jamie set out to expose him and worked out (somehow) that the first letter of each of the weapons he used built up the crook's real name! Methinks the Alpha Man had been reading too many Batman comics and developed a Riddler fixation! Clues were scattered throughout the episodes, and if a reader figured out who the Alpha Man was, they got a cash prize! Though frankly, a paper round would probably have been rather less hassle.


PENNY CARTER AND JAMIE ROBERTSON WERE TRYING TO EXPOSE THE IDENTITY OF THE MYSTERIOUS ALPHA MAN . WHO HAD KIDNAPPED PENNY'S SCIENTIST FATHER BY COLLECTING THE FIRST LETTERS OF THE VARIOUS WEAPONS THAT HE USED, THUS REVEALING THE CROOK'S NAME THEY ALREADY SUSPECTED FOUR PEOPLE . BUT NOW, HAVING TRAPPED THE CHILDREN IN A NARROW INLET, THE ALPHA MAN UNLEASHED HIS STRANGEST WEAPON OF ALL!
SURRENDER TO MY FEATHERED FURIES, OR YOU ARE DOOMED TO A 'RIPPING' TIME! YEE-MAAAAAA!
AAAWWKEEE!
WHAT THE ?

THE Crikey! REVIEW







Crikey! STRIPS

CRIKEY! IS ABOUT COMIC STRIPS, RIGHT? WELL, WE FIGURED THAT A MAGAZINE ABOUT COMIC STRIPS SHOULD HAVE ITS OWN COMICS STRIP SECTION! SO HERE WE GO... WE BEGIN WITH GLENN & FLEMING'S HATCH, AN EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK AT 'MIRANDA' - THE NEW STRIP FROM JOHN M BURNS AND JOHN OAKIN... PAT MILLS & LEE O'CONNOR'S 'REQUIEM' AND AN OLD FAVOURITE FROM PETER MADDOCKS...ENJOY!

HATCH

HELLO! I'M MIRANDA! IN 1991 I WON THE WORLD HULA HOOP TITLE-AND AFTER THAT THINGS GOT REALLY WIERD...

MY GANSTER FATHER PUT ME IN A CONVENT! BOY, DID HE HATE ME!

I ESCAPED, AND THE PROFESSOR'S AUNTS TOOK ME IN...BUT...

GENUINE MING

I NEED TO TELL THE PROFESSOR AND JAMIE THAT THE AUNTS ARE GETTING INTO BIG TROUBLE...

GOT MYSELF A JOB DOWN IN PORTOBELLO ROAD SELLING RETRO 60S GEAR IN MINI HA HA'S ..

AHA! I'M IM

...AND IF I TOLD YOU THAT I'VE MET ALBERT EINSTEIN AND JACK THE RIPPER YOU'D THINK I'D GONE COMPLETELTY BONKERS... WOULDN'T YOU?

OH! AND THOSE RED FEATHERS AND THE HOOLY SKIRT- THAT'S NOT ME! IT'S ONE OF JAMIE'S FANTASIES!

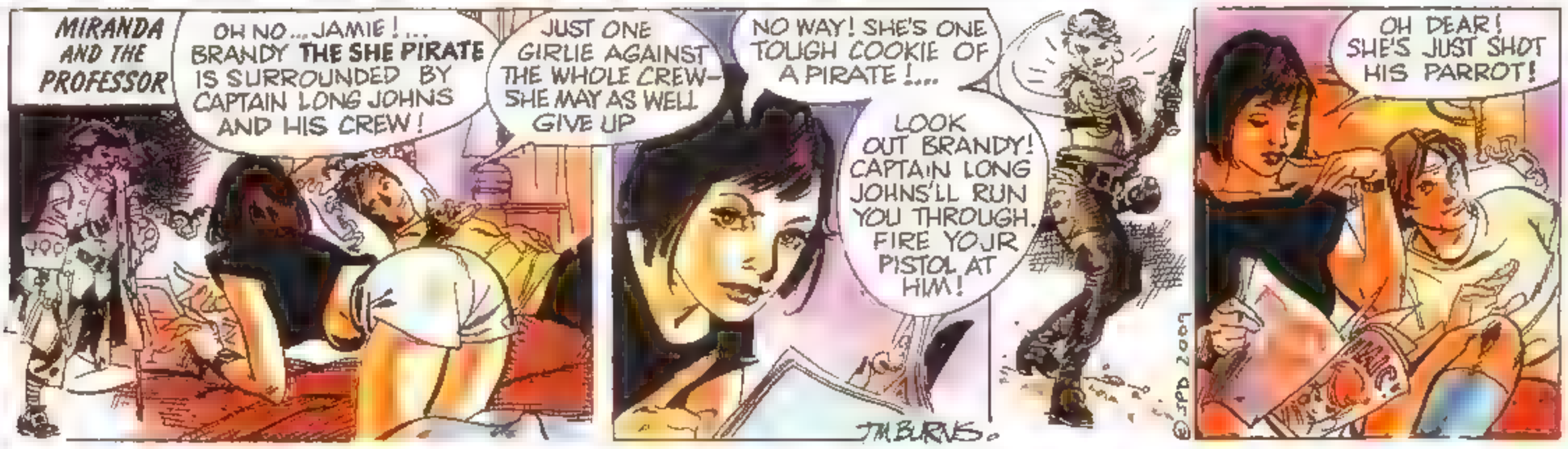
JOHN McBURNEY '09

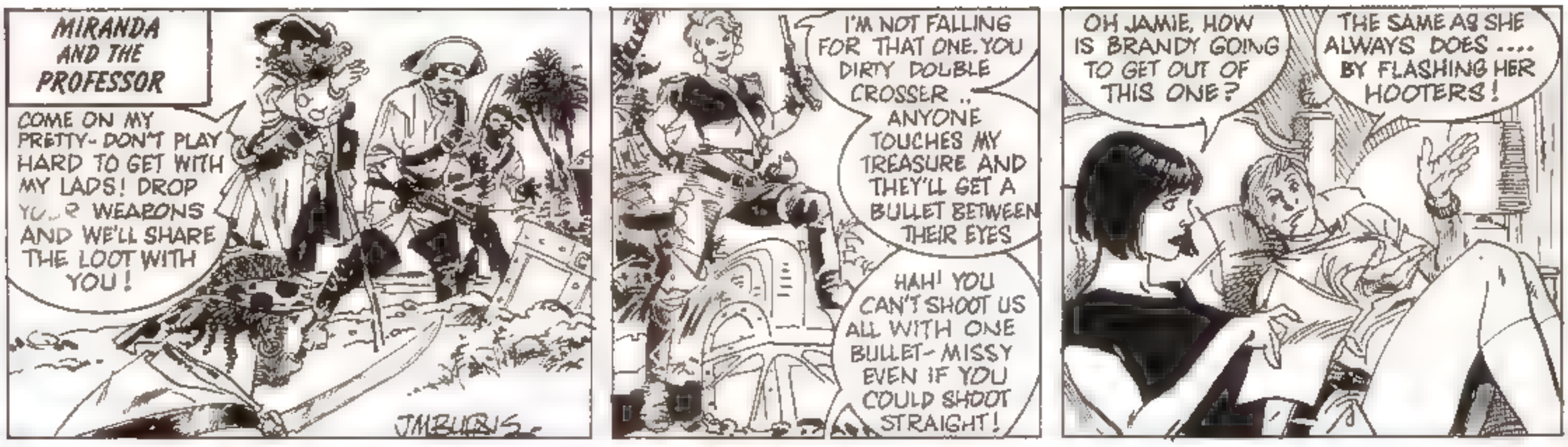
MIRANDA

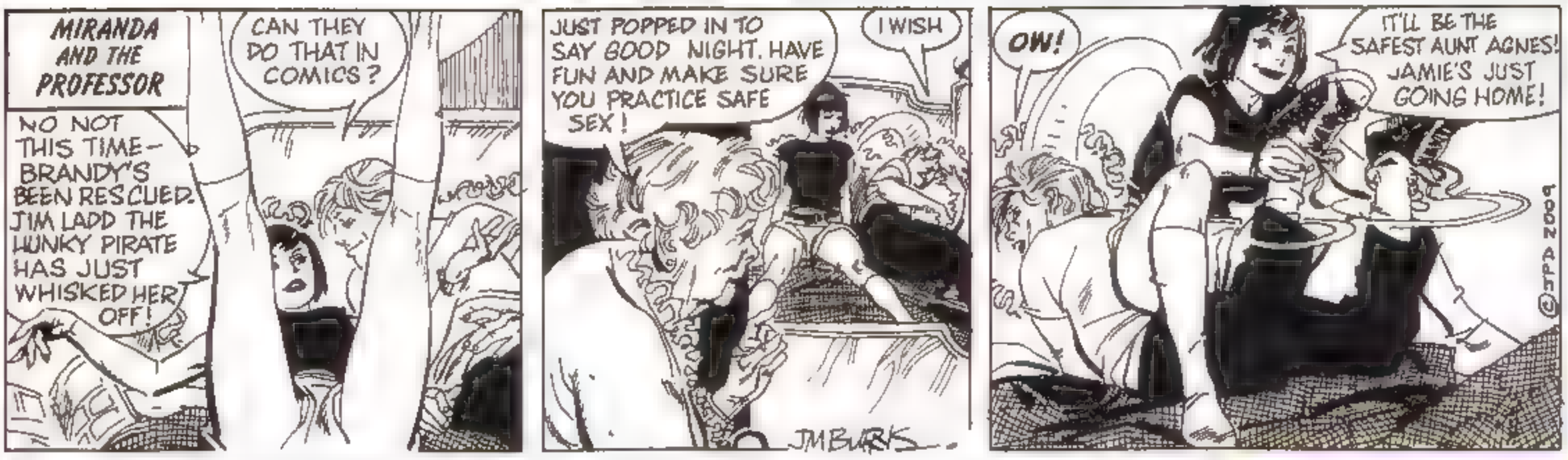
BY JOHN M BURNS & JOHN DAKIN

John M Burns was born in Essex in 1938. Following work for Junior Express *and* School Friend, *John moved onto* TV Century 21 *and* Lady Penelope *in the mid-60s. He drew daily comics strips for newspapers* The Daily Sketch, The Daily Mirror *and* The Sun *and succeeded Enrique Romero (see* Crikey! *9) on the iconic* Modesty Blaise *for the period of 1978-79. John illustrated TV tie-in strips for* Look-in, *and he also drew the title strip for the comic* Countdown, *before moving to* 2000AD *in the late 70s. Burns began his 2000AD career by working on* Judge Dredd, *a strip to which he continues to contribute to this day. Surprisingly, he does not enjoy drawing science fiction strips!*

John Dakin is a freelance writer and editor. Thanks to John and John for this sneak preview and Crikey! *exclusive!*


MIRANDA AND THE PROFESSOR
OH NO...JAMIE!... BRANDY THE SHE PIRATE IS SURROUNDED BY CAPTAIN LONG JOHNS AND HIS CREW!
JUST ONE GIRLIE AGAINST THE WHOLE CREW- SHE MAY AS WELL GIVE UP
NO WAY! SHE'S ONE TOUGH COOKIE OF A PIRATE!...
LOOK OUT BRANDY! CAPTAIN LONG JOHNS'LL RUN YOU THROUGH. FIRE YOJR PISTOL AT HIM!
JM BURNS
OH DEAR! SHE'S JUST SHOT HIS PARROT!


MIRANDA AND THE PROFESSOR
COME ON MY PRETTY- DON'T PLAY HARD TO GET WITH MY LADS! DROP YOUR WEAPONS AND WE'LL SHARE THE LOOT WITH YOU!
JM BURNS
I'M NOT FALLING FOR THAT ONE. YOU DIRTY DOUBLE CROSSER.. ANYONE TOUCHES MY TREASURE AND THEY'LL GET A BULLET BETWEEN THEIR EYES
HAH! YOU CAN'T SHOOT US ALL WITH ONE BULLET- MISSY EVEN IF YOU COULD SHOOT STRAIGHT!
OH JAMIE, HOW IS BRANDY GOING TO GET OUT OF THIS ONE?
THE SAME AS SHE ALWAYS DOES .... BY FLASHING HER HOOTERS!


MIRANDA AND THE PROFESSOR
NO NOT THIS TIME- BRANDY'S BEEN RESCUED. JIM LADD THE HUNKY PIRATE HAS JUST WHISKED HER OFF!
CAN THEY DO THAT IN COMICS?
JUST POPPED IN TO SAY GOOD NIGHT. HAVE FUN AND MAKE SURE YOU PRACTICE SAFE SEX!
I WISH
JM BURNS
OW!
IT'LL BE THE SAFEST AUNT AGNES! JAMIE'S JUST GOING HOME!
©JPD 2009

TO BE CONTINUED?

WHERE AM I?

I WAS ON THE BATTLEFIELD THEN I SEEMED TO FALL INTO SOME KIND OF PIT '

I MUST BE DEAD FOR THIS IS SURELY

HELL!

REBECCA'S PHOTO I BROUGHT IT WITH ME

CAN I STILL BE ALIVE?

REQUIEM CHEVALIER VAMPIRE WAS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN FRENCH BY NICKEL EDITIONS, AND HAS ALSO BEEN TRANSLATED INTO GERMAN BY KULT EDITIONS AND PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH IN THE USA BY HEAVY METAL. NOW, PANINI COMICS ARE BRINGING PAT MILLS AND OLIVIER LEDROIT'S SAGA OF A VAMPIRE ON THE STRANGE HELL WORLD OF RESURRECTION TO A WIDER AUDIENCE IN BRITAIN THAN HAVE PREVIOUSLY HAD ACCESS TO IT.

CRIKEY! PRESENTS AN EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW OF THIS EXTRAORDINARY STORY...

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Requiem Vampire Knight Volume 2: Dracula and The Vampire Ball
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Requiem

WHAT D'YOU THINK OF THE COAT, DEAD-HEAD?

VOICES?

NOT SINCE I LOST MY NOSE

DO I LOOK OKAY WITHOUT ONE?

THANKS, BABY PITY THEY KEEP FALLING OUT

PROBABLY ANOTHER GERMAN SOLDIER

YEAH. IT MAKES YOUR EYES SEEM BIGGER

IT SUITS YOU SHRINE PITY YOUR SKIN'S MELTING AGAIN. THOUGH

BE HONEST DO I SMELL REALLY BAD?

DEAD-HEAD! THERE'S SOMEONE MOVING UNDER GROUND

IF HE SURFACES GIVE HIM THE SAME TREATMENT AS THE OTHERS

HE'S SLOWING DOWN! HE COULD BE STUCK BETWEEN THE WORLDS.

MAYBE WE SHOULD DIG HIM OUT? HE MIGHT HAVE SOME MORPHINE

DOUBT IT HIS COMRADES DIDN'T

WE NEED SOME THING TO STOP THE PAIN. STAY BACK UNTIL HE'S CLIMBED OUT - JUST IN CASE.

THE RESURRECTION WELCOMING COMMITTEE WILL BE WAITING!

DEAD HEAD! RESURRECTIONIST PATROL SHIP!

HEADING THIS WAY!

WHAT'S IT DOING THIS FAR OUT IN THE KILLING FIELDS?

YOU ZOMBIES! LOOTING NEW ARRIVALS IS FORBIDDEN! DROP YOUR WEAPONS NOW!

MAN THE LAUNCHER!

FIRE!

DAMN!

WE GOT HIM!

WE GOT OURSELVES A RESURRECTIONIST!

LET'S FINISH HIM. IT'S TIME TO MAKE THE UNDEAD

VAMPIRES THINK THEY'RE THE LORDS OF RESURRECTION!

BUT THEY'RE UNDEAD!

CRACH!!!

THEY'VE GOT BAD KARMA - JUST LIKE THE REST OF US!

WE'RE ALL LOSERS HERE! THE TRASH OF THE OLD WORLD!

I'M GLAD TO HEAR YOU KNOW YOUR PLACE!

HE'S DROPPED HIS IMPALER!

ZHOR AZHROTH!

NOW HOW DOES IT FEEL, NOSFERATU.

TO BE ON THE RECEIVING END FOR A CHANGE?

LIKE I GIVE A SHIT!

I M ALREADY ROTTING FOR ALL ETERNITY!

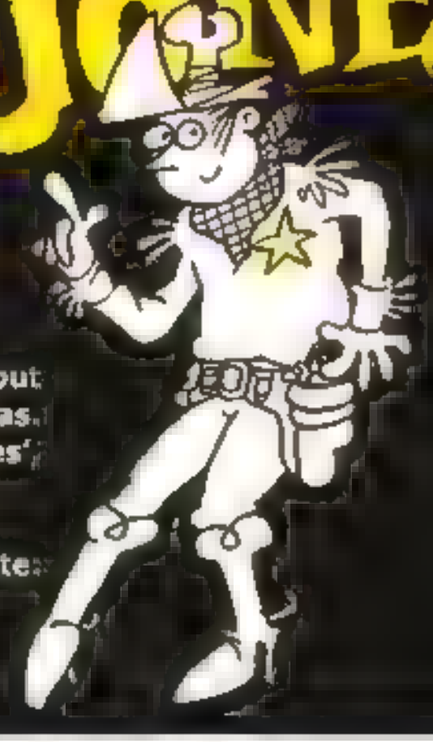
I SHOULD WARN YOU KILLING A VAMPIRE KNIGHT HAS SEVERE CONSEQUENCES. YOUR PUBLIC DISEMBOWELMENT AND MUTILATION.

..WILL BE SLOW PAINFUL. AND HUMILIATING

THEN DO IT

PETER MADDOCKS'

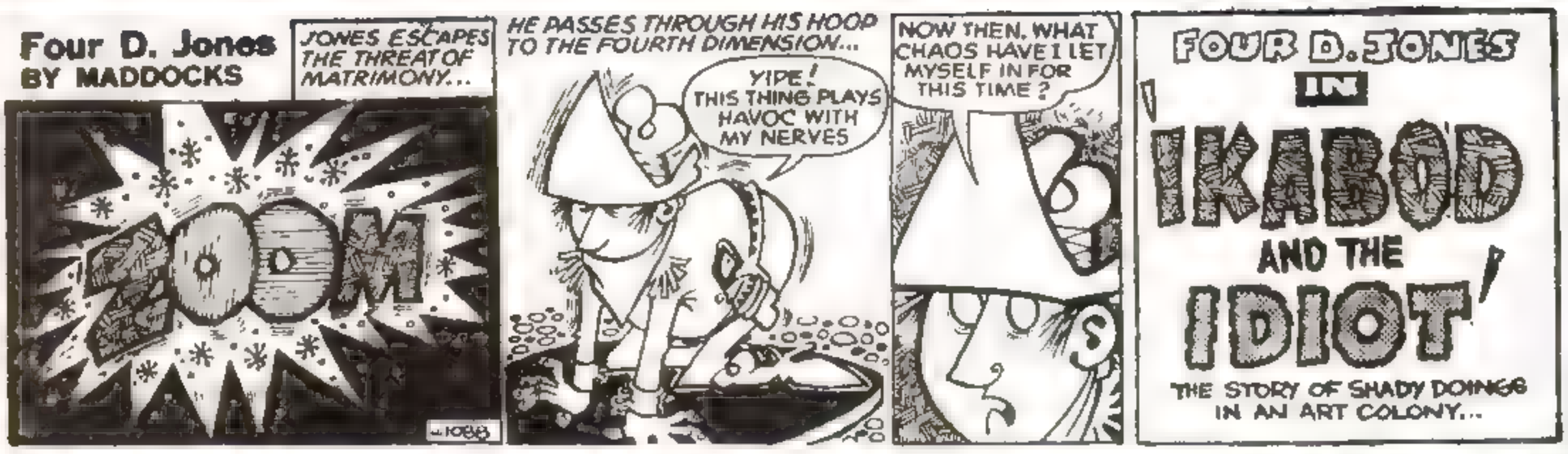
FOUR D JONES

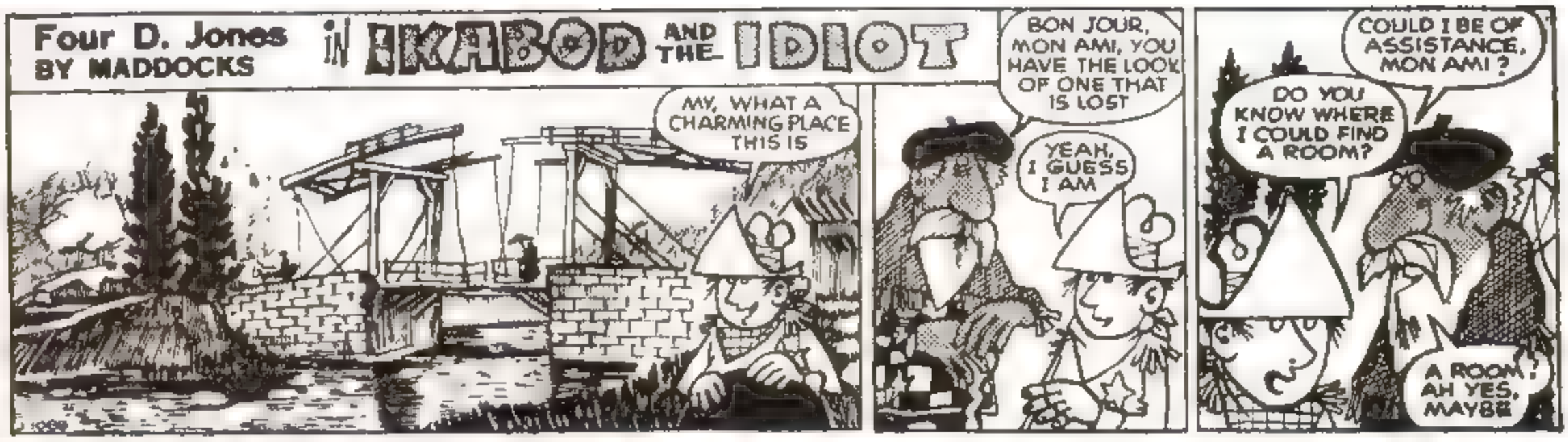


Peter Maddocks was born in Birmingham on 1 April 1928. In 1939 he won a scholarship to the Moseley School of Art in Birmingham and later became a leading cartoonist, contributing to many of the UK's leading Daily and Sunday newspapers in a distinguished career. Among his creations he can boast *The Family Ness*, *Penny Crayon* and *Jimbo and the Jet Set* for the BBC.

Retired and now living in southern Spain, Peter has put down his pencil in favour of a paint brush and canvas. Presented here is another of his creations 'Four D Jones', which ran from 1955 to 1965 in the *Daily Express*.

For more of Peter's current work check out his website: http://www.petermaddocks.com


Four D. Jones
BY MADDOCKS
JONES ESCAPES THE THREAT OF MATRIMONY...
ZOOM
HE PASSES THROUGH HIS HOOP TO THE FOURTH DIMENSION...
YIPE! THIS THING PLAYS HAVOC WITH MY NERVES
NOW THEN, WHAT CHAOS HAVE I LET MYSELF IN FOR THIS TIME?
FOUR D. JONES IN
'IKABOD AND THE IDIOT'
THE STORY OF SHADY DOINGS IN AN ART COLONY...


Four D. Jones
BY MADDOCKS
IN 'IKABOD AND THE IDIOT'
MY, WHAT A CHARMING PLACE THIS IS
BON JOUR, MON AMI, YOU HAVE THE LOOK OF ONE THAT IS LOST
YEAH, I GUESS I AM
COULD I BE OF ASSISTANCE, MON AMI?
DO YOU KNOW WHERE I COULD FIND A ROOM?
A ROOM? AH YES, MAYBE

Four D. Jones
BY MADDOCKS
IF YOU WANT A ROOM I SUGGEST YOU SPEAK WITH OUR POSTMASTER
J.1090
JONES APPROACHES THE POSTMASTER
I SAY! JUST A MOMENT
POSTES
I WONDER, COULD YOU HELP ME FIND A ROOM FOR THE NIGHT?
AH, OUI
MY GOOD FRIEND VINCENT WILL OBLIGE, I AM SURE

TO BE CONTINUED...

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A D V E R T I S E M E N T

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DAMAGE CIRCUS "Renzo Podesta's art is jolly good" (SFX)
THE HITCHER by Gary Wilkinson (*2000AD*) and children's book illustrator, Paul Harrison-Davies
DEAD (comic): zombies in the Wild West by Gary Simpson (*2000AD, RedEye)* and Lee O'Connor *(Vurt, Iraq)*
OUIJA: *Heartstrings* (comic): Gary Simpson's demon hunter in urban Britain. Illustrated by Tim Youlden.
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- S T A R S C A P E O N L I N E . C O M -
c o m i c s · c a r t o o n s · m u s i c · m o v i e s
editor@starscapecomic.co.uk

Everyone has heard of Marvel Comics. *And everyone knows they're as immediately identifiable with America as* McDonalds, Coca Cola *or truly rubbish TV sit-coms. But from 1972 to the early 1990's, there was another* Marvel Comics, *and this one was decidedly British! Tony Ingram continues his overview of one of Britain's best...*

THE RISE AND FALL OF MARVEL UK

PART FOUR

In September '79, Marvel Comic-the book which had been Mighty World of Marvel, *the flagship of the line-finally bit the dust after 352 issues. It was supposedly merged with* Spider-Man, *though the numbering actually continued with a new monthly title:* Marvel Superheroes *began with #353, starring the* Avengers. *More on that book later. First, though, something rather more significant in the larger scheme of things .*

On 17th October 1979, *Doctor Who Weekly* was born, Dez Skinn's latest and arguably greatest brainchild and the mainstay of the line from there on in. The good Doctor had already had a long life as a comic character, in fifteen years worth of strips in *TV Comic*, but this was the first time (aside from one *TV Comic Special*) that he had been the star of his own title and it was long overdue, it seemed. *Doctor Who* was (aside from a couple of science fiction reprints from the US *Marvel Classic Comics* title in the early issues) the first Marvel UK title to feature exclusively British originated material. Even *Hulk Comic* had at least one US reprint throughout its run. Moreover, the weekly was devoted solely to one subject - Doctor Who - and would remain so, whereas all Marvel UK's previous licensed titles (*Star Wars*, *Planet of the Apes*, *Conan*) had eventually ended up sharing their pages with Marvel's superhero strips.

Obviously, Marvel Comics considered that they were onto a winner with Doctor Who, and they were right, though it took awhile to get the formula right. The classic reprints bit the dust fairly early, but the weekly format lasted 43 issues before the mag morphed into *Doctor Who Monthly* (which later became *Doctor Who Magazine*), and found its natural home in the schedules. The good Doctor's fans wanted a 'proper' magazine, not a mere comic, it seemed-but though the articles and features content was increased, the comic strips remained a vital part of *DWW/DWM*, with some of Britain's top rising talents contributing to them. Dave Gibbons' early *Doctor Who* strips in particular-including such memorable tales as The Iron Legion, set on an alternate Earth where Rome never fell, and The Star Beast, in which cute, cuddly but psychotic alien Beep the Meep crash lands in the town of Blackcastle - are rightly regarded as classics, though as the perceptive reader might surmise they were not intended to be taken entirely seriously. Later, stories such as Steve Parkhouse's 'The Tides of Time' would take the strip in newer, more thought provoking directions. But the backup strips-featuring other characters and concepts from the TV series-were often no less impressive or memorable. One of the best was Alan Moore's wonderful 'Business as Usual', about an industrial spy who accidentally discovers a plot by the alien Nestenes to infiltrate Earth with their plastic Auton replicas. In a tense final episode, the luckless Max Fisher seems about to escape when he is caught and killed by the appropriately named Auton leader, Mr. Dollman, and the final scene shows a replica of Fisher himself, months later, putting flowers on the real Fisher's grave. "Plastic flowers, naturally", as the last line tells us...

DOCTOR WHO WEEKLY HIT THE SHELVES IN OCTOBER 1979. THE COMICS UNIVERSE WOULD NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN

Ironically, though the Marvel characters were deliberately kept out of *DWM*, several characters featured in the Who strips did eventually cross over into the mainstream Marvel Universe. Alien mercenaries the *Special Executive*, created by Alan Moore (there's that name again) for a trilogy of stories

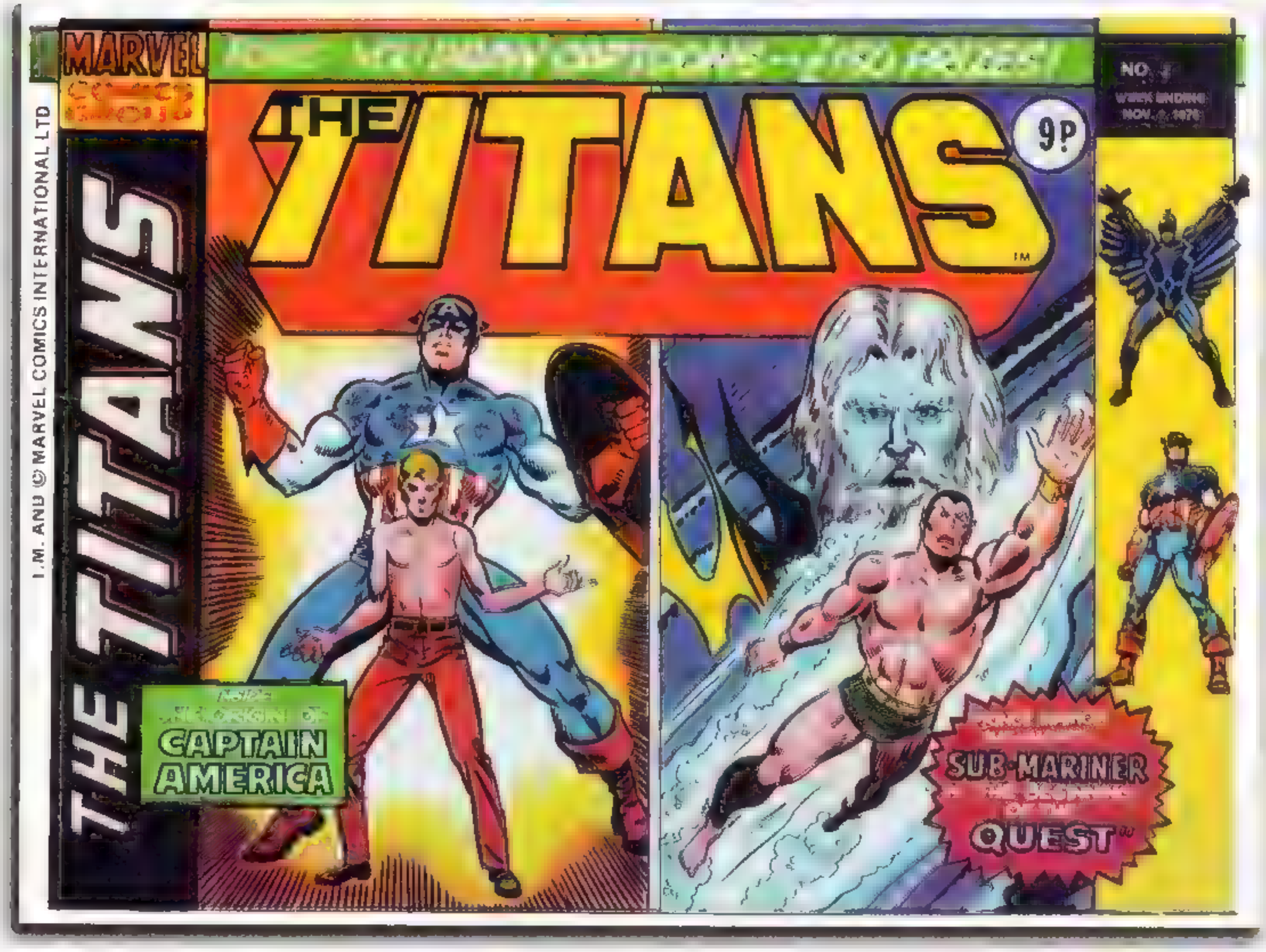
featuring the Time Lords, eventually resurfaced as members of Captain Britain's supporting cast. The Freefall Warriors, created for a one-off encounter with the Doctor, received their own series, while the villainous Josiah W Dogbolter clashed with the Doc before becoming a thorn in the side of metallic maniac Deaths Head. And while *Abslom Daak, Dalek Killer* never made it into the Marvel Universe, his adventures were popular enough to be reprinted in *Captain Britain Monthly* as a backup, as well as in a collected edition. Later, Daak would transcend comics entirely, becoming the first character from the comic strips to find his way into an original *Doctor Who* novel (*Deceit*, written by Peter Darvill-Evans,

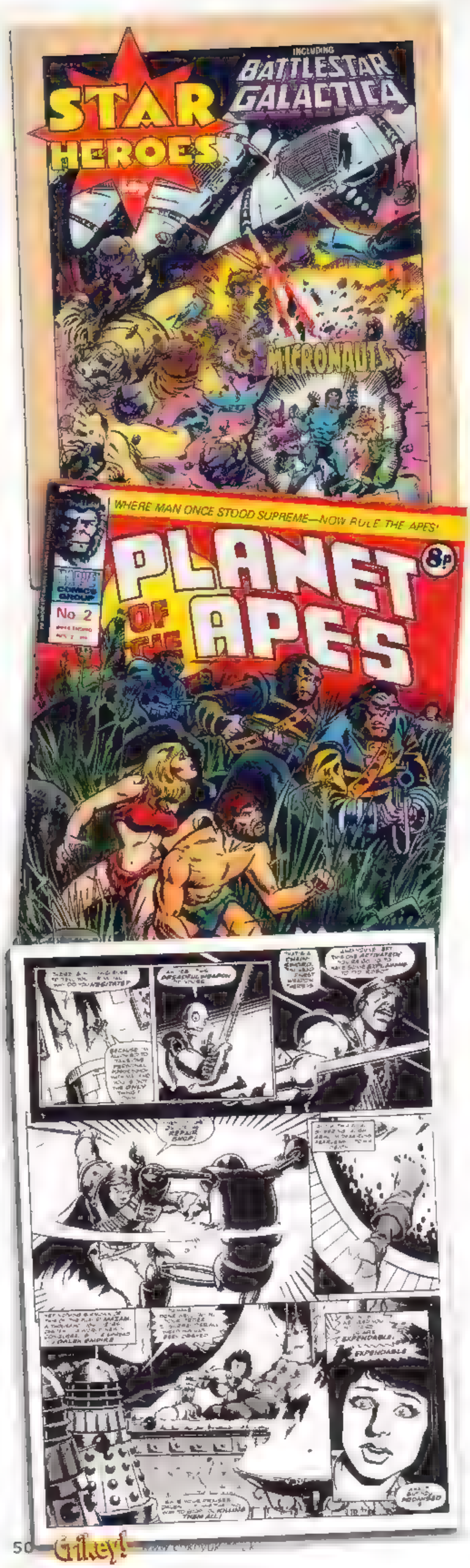
DOCTOR WHO MONTHLY #44, THE FIRST MONTHLY ISSUE. IT'S A PROPER MAGAZINE, NOW!

published in 1993 as part of Virgin's *Doctor Who New Adventures* line). Eventually, *DWM* would outlast even Marvel UK itself. It is now published by Panini UK, and the *Doctor Who* comic strip is still going strong after almost thirty years!

1980 saw more changes throughout the Marvel line. March of that year saw the arrival of the first wave of *Marvel Pocketbooks*, neat little monthly digests which featured titles such as *Spider-Man*, *Fantastic Four*, *Chiller* (featuring Dracula and the Man Thing, among others), *The Titans* (with Captain America, Thor and Iron Man), *Hulk*, *Conan and Star Heroes* (continuing the Micronauts from *Star Wars Weekly*, alongside another licensed strip, *Battlestar Galactica*). *Star Heroes* was already ailing within a >

BELOW: THE USUAL SUSPECTS IN AN USUAL FORMAT...



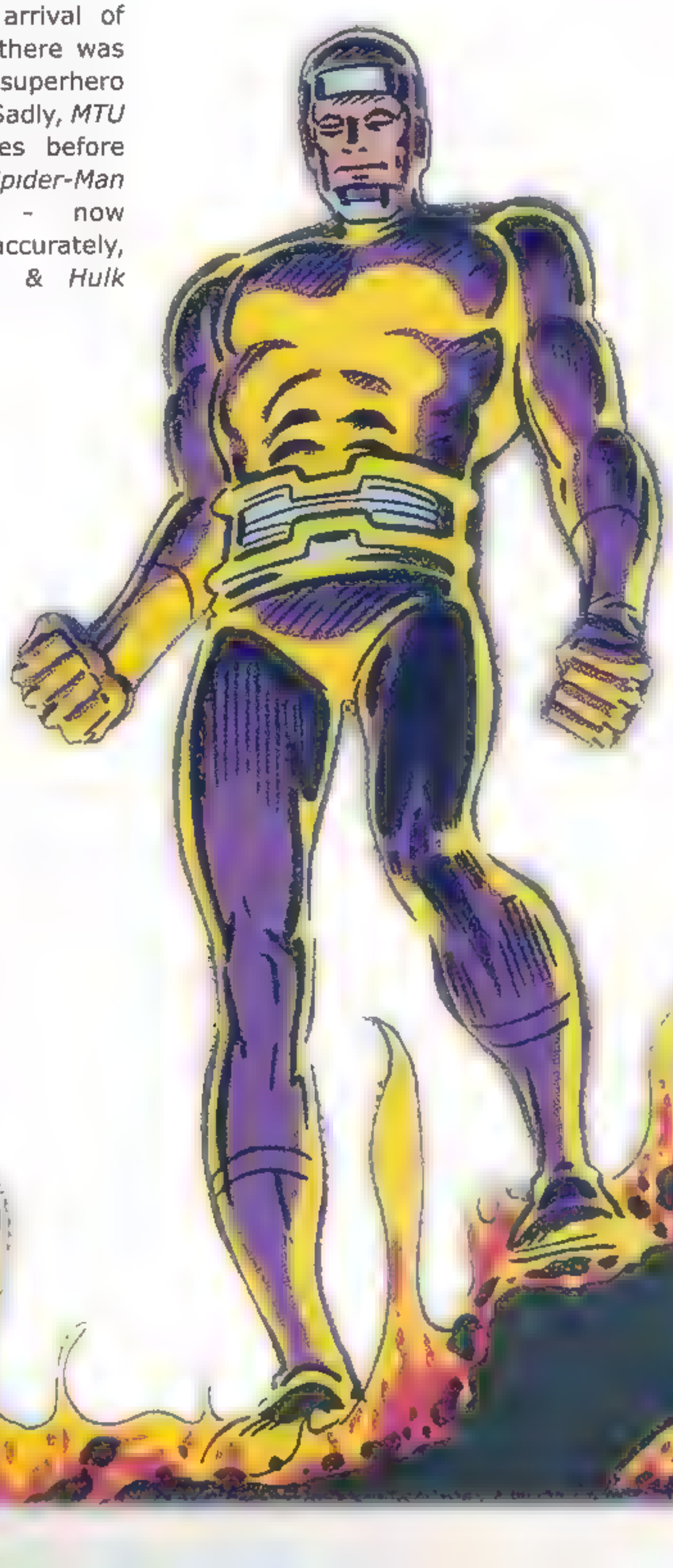


year and morphed into *X-Men Pocketbook* with #10, while several others fared even worse, including a *Young Romance Pocketbook* which was perhaps a misguided attempt to resurrect that dying genre. In fact, none of the Pocketbooks lasted more than 28 issues in the end. More successful was *Starburst*, "the magazine of cinema and TV fantasy", which proved that monthly magazines with more serious content could sell well for the company and probably influenced the direction taken by *Doctor Who Monthly* (Dez Skinn brought *Starburst* to Marvel with him, though they would later sell it on in 1985). The weekly line expanded too, with a number of themed titles. *Forces in Combat* (15th May 80-21st January 81) was a war comic of sorts, though following the failure of *Fury*, *FIC* featured stories from various eras rather than just World War II: Fury himself was still in evidence, but so were western adventures with the *Rawhide Kid*, and even colour reprints of Ron Embleton's classic *Wulf the Briton* strip (how Marvel acquired that one, I have no idea). *Valour* (a short lived title, 5th November 80-11th March 81) specialized in Sword & Sorcery and magic related strips, including Dr Strange and the ever reliable Conan, as well as Merlin the magician (Merlin's story would be reprinted the following year in the one-off *Merlin & Excalibur Special*), while the inventively titled *Future Tense* was science fiction orientated, and featured the likes of Marvel's licensed *Star Trek* series, and the continuing

(TOP LEFT): STAR HEROES (ART BY MIKE GOLDEN)
(MIDDLE LEFT): PLANET OF THE APES
(BOTTOM LEFT): ABSLOM DAAK – BETRAYAL, DALEK STYLE! (ART BY STEVE DILLON)

adventures of the Micronauts following their departure from *Star Heroes Pocketbook* (the Micronauts actually had a quite lengthy unbroken run in one title or another, though *Future Tense* was their last home in Britain). *Future Tense* was the most successful of the three, absorbing both *Forces in Combat* and *Valour* before long (with Conan sitting uncomfortably alongside the Micronauts and company, though the more obviously fantastic Weirdworld and FIC's space war saga, Rom, fitted in just fine). *Hulk Comic* was cancelled on 15th May 80, the green goliath joining the pages of *Spider-Man*, but six months later 11th November saw the arrival of *Marvel Team-Up* so there was still enough weekly superhero action to go around. Sadly, *MTU* lasted just 25 issues before being merged with *Spider-Man & Hulk Weekly* - now imaginatively, if inaccurately, retitled *Spider-Man & Hulk Team-Up*.

By 1981, the now mostly independent Marvel UK (now under the editorial control of Paul Neary) was doing well, with around two dozen ongoing titles published throughout the year, weeklies, monthlies and pocketbooks. There was something for everyone - *Chiller* for the horror fans, *Dr Who*, *Star Wars* and *Future Tense* for the sci-fi fans, *Savage Action* for the adventure fans and *Savage Sword of Conan* for those who liked naked ladies and big monsters. Superhero fans were well served too, by *Spider-Man & Hulk* and by three new anthology titles, *Captain America* (25th Feb 81-7th April 82), *Marvel Action* (1st April-8th July 81) and *Marvel Super Adventure* (May 6th-Oct 28th 81). The latter two were eventually absorbed by *Captain America*. Also worth a mention are two *Western Gunfighters Specials* published around this time, one of which carried a previously unpublished piece of cover artwork by the late, great Frank Bellamy! And of course, those great three panel humour strips by Tim Quinn and Dicky Howett which graced the letters pages of the weeklies around this time-Jet Lagg, 'I was Adolf's Double', and even (in *DWM*) the sublimely silly and long running 'Doctor Who?'



STEVE DITKO'S MACHINE MAN FROM FORCES IN COMBAT #3 (1980)

After 35 issues, *Future Tense* went monthly (the last issue was #41, January '82), joining a magazine lineup which now included *Marvel Superheroes*, *Rampage*, *Doctor Who*, *Conan*, *Savage Action* and humour magazine *Frantic* (featuring reprints from *Crazy*, Marvel US's answer to *Mad Magazine*). June '81 saw the addition of *Blockbuster* (featuring *Omega the Unknown*, *Iron Fist* and the *Inhumans*) but it lasted only nine issues before merging with Rampage; ironically, where Omega's adventures had been cut short in the US after 10 issues, in Britain he actually lasted one less! In October, another licensed monthly was launched - *Blake's 7*! But Terry Nation's space opera was already on what would prove to be its final series on TV, and though the magazine outlasted its source material, it ended in August '83 after 23 issues and a Special or two. >

The big event of that year though, came in *Marvel Superheroes* #377: Captain Britain was back, in his own series once more! His return had been more or less inevitable since the end of the Black Knight saga, of course, but the Captain Britain we met in this issue came as something of a surprise. Transformed by the magic of Merlin, he had a new costume and had gained a foot in height and a helluva lot of muscle, which was just as well as an unfortunate collision in the void (with the time traveler from Timesmasher, as we learned in *Rampage* #44) had knocked him off course on his journey home and the parallel Earth the unfortunate hero now found himself stuck on was far from safe. Under the guiding hands of writer Dave Thorpe and then unknown artist Alan Davis, the Captain spent months dealing with the insanity of a disintegrating world ... until Alan Moore took over the writing chores in #387 and promptly killed off half the cast, including Captain Britain. *MSH* #388 seemed to be his swansong, but a text piece in #389 left us with the knowledge that Alan had plans for the Captain yet.

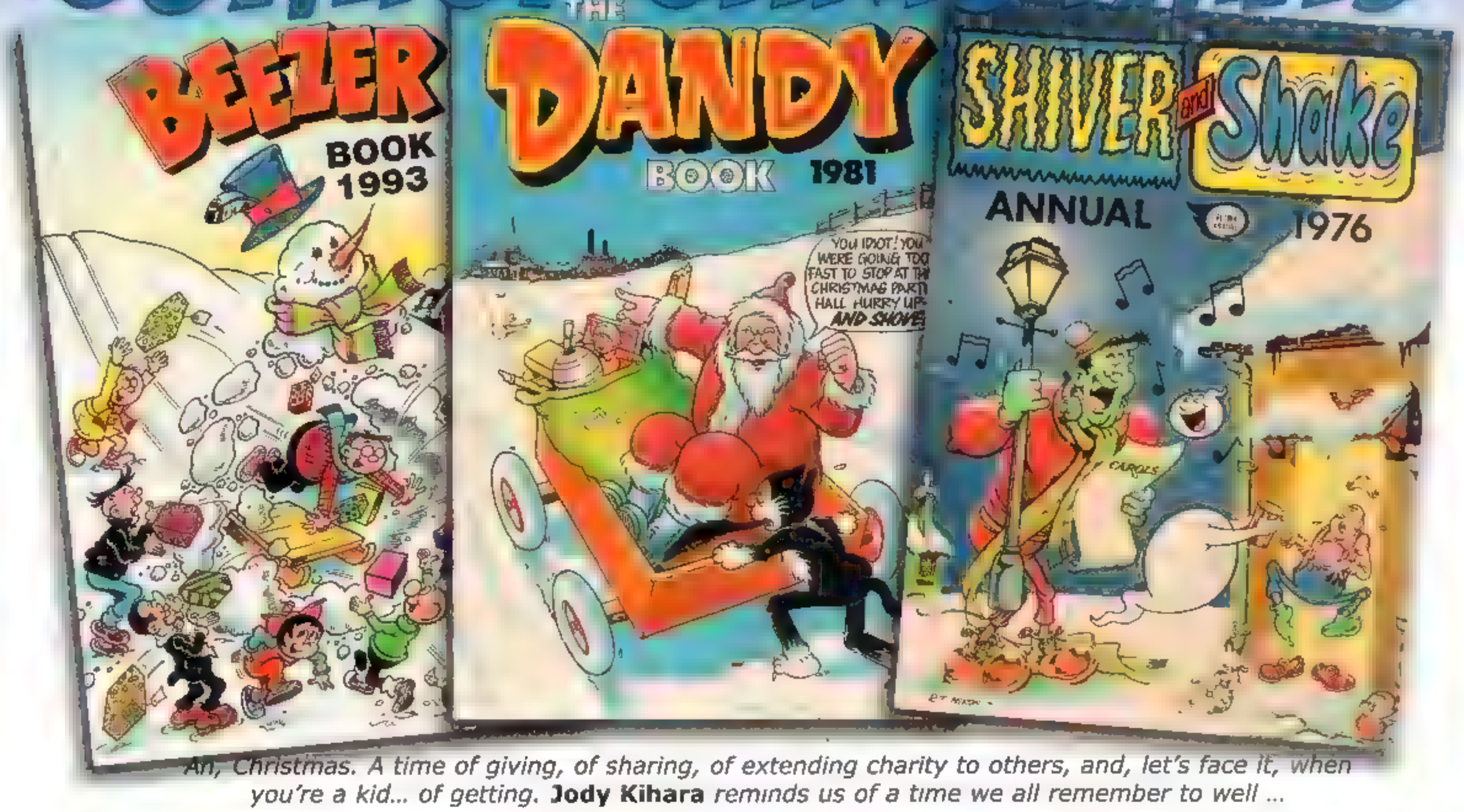
By October 1981, Marvel's regular output included three weeklies (*Spider-Man & Hulk*, *Captain America* and *Marvel Super Adventure*), no less than ten pocketbooks and a whole host of monthlies including *Dr Who*, *Star Wars*, *Starburst*, *Blake's 7*, *MSH*, *Blockbuster*, *Rampage*, *Future Tense*, *Conan*, *Savage Action* and *Marvel Madhouse* (the successor to *Frantic*), plus a new title for younger readers, *Worzel Gummidge* (and later, first *Scooby Doo* and then *Rupert Weekly*, starring Mary Tourtel's immortal bear cub).

Within a few months though, the weekly line had expanded again with a new Incredible *Hulk Weekly* (March 31st - Sept 29th 82), while all the weeklies - *Hulk*, *Captain America* and the newly rechristened *Spider-Man TV Comic* (Nicholas Hammond was playing the webbed wonder on TV at the time) - had gone from cheap newsprint to glossy covers and even (*gasp!*) some interior colour pages, usually with a colour poster as the centre spread.

October the same year would see the *Fantastic Four* replace *Hulk* in the weekly line-up (*Hulk* merged with *Spider-Man* once again, the *TV Comic* suffix having lasted little longer than the show itself). But there was a downside to all these changes, for longtime readers. The stories being published in the FF and Hulk titles, and soon in some of the others, had already been published years before in *MWOM* among other places.

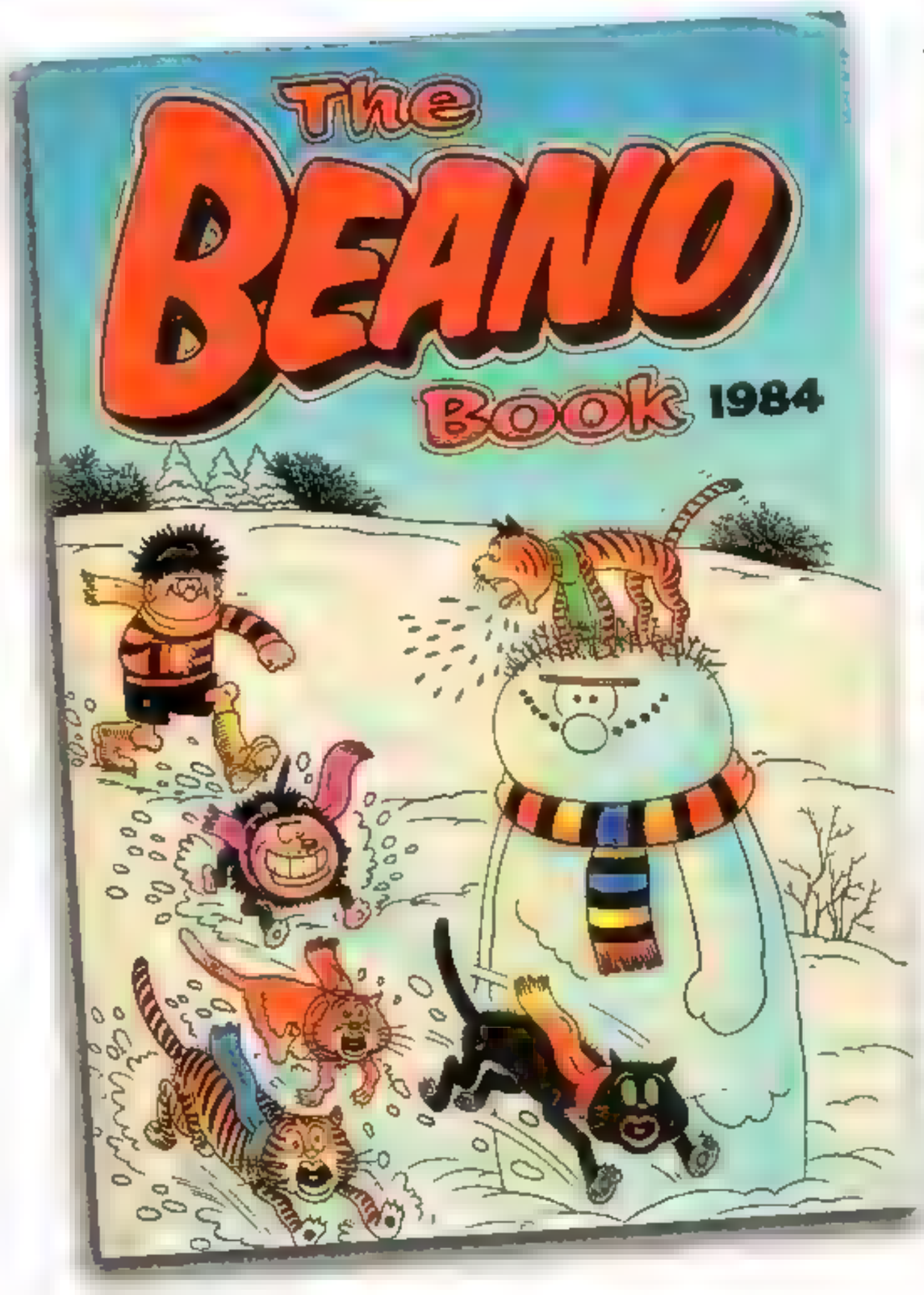
The lengthy, more or less uninterrupted run of continuing stories which readers had been following for around a decade across several different titles were abandoned as a new generation of readers came aboard who had never seen the older material. It was the end of an era, though a largely unremarked one at the time. ●

COMICY CHRISTMAS


BEEZER BOOK 1993
THE DANDY BOOK 1981
YOU IDIOT! YOU WERE GOING TOO FAST TO STOP AT THE CHRISTMAS PARTY! HALL HURRY UP AND SHOVE!
SHIVER and Shake ANNUAL 1976
CAROLS

An, Christmas. A time of giving, of sharing, of extending charity to others, and, let's face it, when you're a kid... of getting. **Jody Kihara** *reminds us of a time we all remember to well ...*

As a child, Christmases were always magical. Plum pudding, snowflakes, and carolling aside, the magic was in no small part due to the ensuing barrage of gifts. There was always the one 'big' present–the new bike, the roller skates, the *GI Joe* jeep–but there were also the smaller ones, made more exciting by the fact they were the 'mystery' gifts. They were riskier, though: would the parcels from relatives be things you liked, or might they (Santa forbid!) be clothes? There was one gift that could always be counted on, however, and this was the comic annual. It might not have been as big as the new bike, or as shiny as the new toy, but it was a fail–safe. This was the gift that never let us down: every year, it could be counted on not only to arrive, but to thrill, to amuse (sometimes to provoke sibling bickering and tears), but more importantly, to be enjoyed over and over again, throughout the year.



Growing up in Canada, we didn't have comic annuals. They were something sent from afar, that arrived in brown paper packages (we didn't have brown packing paper either, so that, too, was exotic), making us bounce up and down wondering which one had been sent to whom. We did of course, share them, but there was a sort of pecking order to who was the official recipient of each one (after a., there it was in writing, under a stamp with the Queen's head!).

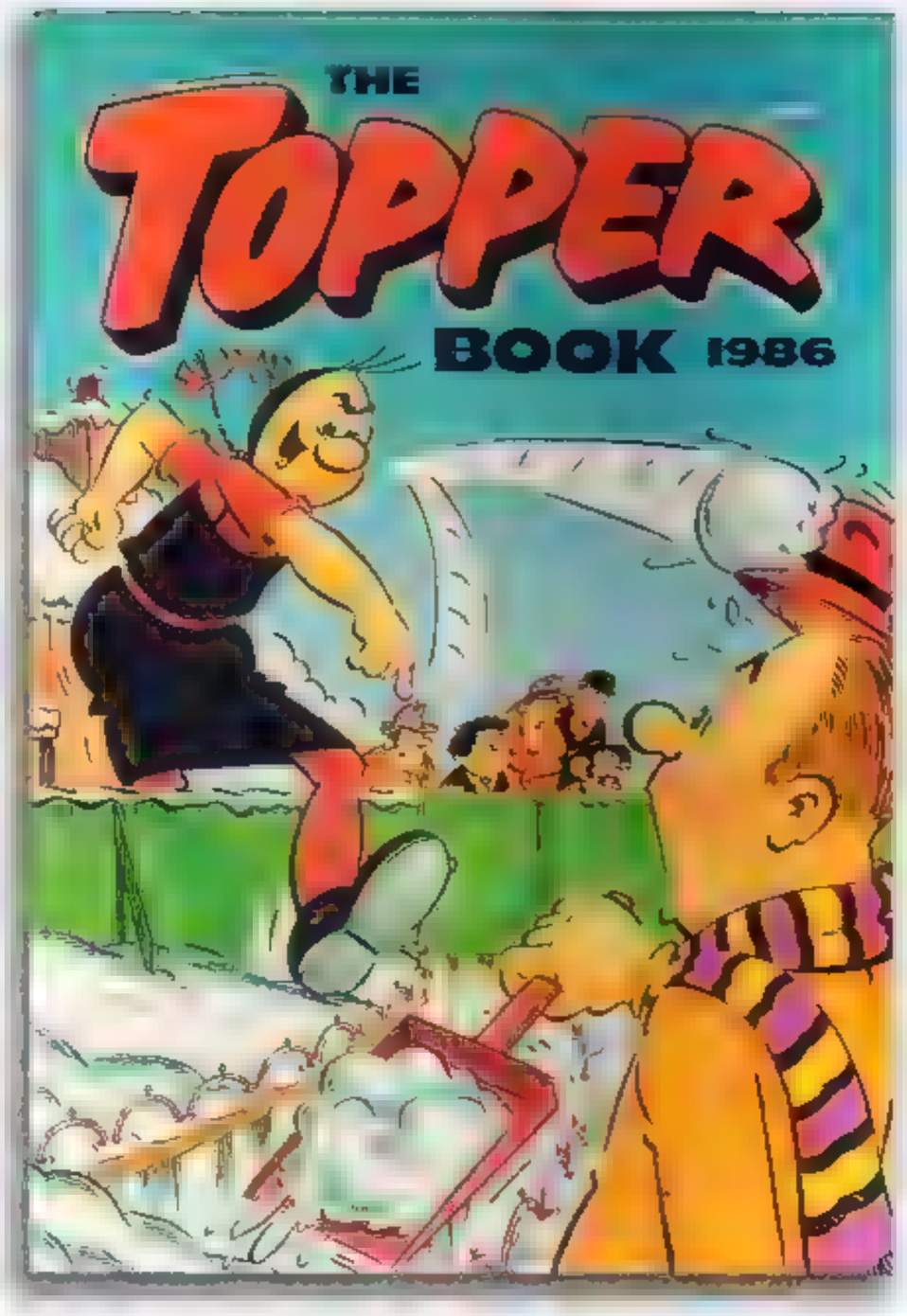
I suppose the relatives sending them didn't realize this mattered, and addressed them randomly–at least that's what I liked to tell myself, seldom being the Beano recipient.

There were so many possibilities: would this Christmas include the *Beano*, *Dandy*, *Topper*, *Beezer*, *Buster*, *Whizzer and Chips*, *Sparky*, *Whoopee*, or *Rupert*? Or hopefully, several from that list? I was vaguely aware >

that other comics annuals existed, but the boy-specific ones (*Valiant*? *Victor*? something that started with 'v' and suffered from a disappointing lack of *Bash Street Kids*) and girl-specific ones (all with girl-names ending in 'y', which seemed highly unoriginal in a world of creativity) seemed unworthy of my *Beano*–and *Rupert*–obsessed notice.

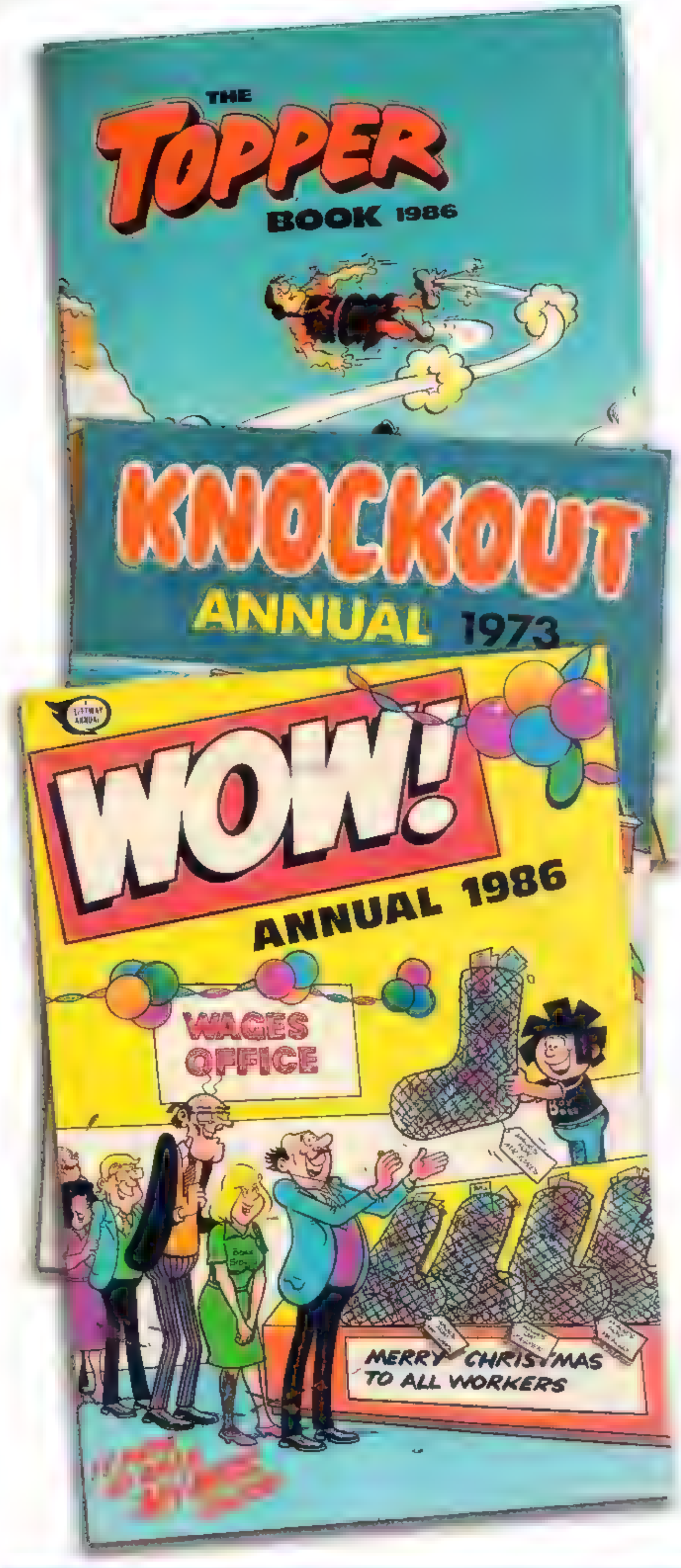
After the present-opening ended in a flurry of wrapping-paper snowdrifts and decapitated chocolate Santas, we would clear away the colourful debris and settle down to read our new annuals. An almost religious hush would fall over the house (our parents must have loved those annuals, too) as we tried to read them as slowly as possible, making their newness last. (What was wrong with the natural order of the universe that we could only read a story for the first time, once?) Yes, these were the same characters we saw every week, but something about the annuals' solid, shiny covers, the thick paper, the brighter colours, made them so exciting. Were the stories better, or did they just seem that way?

Some of the stories were, of course, Christmas-themed, but in fact we wanted as few of these as possible. We could see further into the future, it seemed, than the writers of the annuals: the stories had to last all year, not just for Christmas. In fact, much more than a year–into the far-off, hazy future that extended somewhere past the age of twelve.



The annuals were a potential weapon for taunting, too. The recipient of the favourite would read it all the more slowly, making their frustrated siblings wait their turn. If it lay on the coffee table and a small hand reached for it, they would snatch it up again, claiming they had only set it down for a minute. (Lies! All lies!) And then, later in the day, there was the grudging admission that each others' annuals were finished with (for now!), followed by the ritual handing-off. (That lasted until I was about eleven, when finally my brothers were too old to be sent comics, and they all came to me. Mine, all mine! Ah, the victory, the power, the retribution...)

Someone once sent me a girls' annual; either one of my aunts was subtly trying to steer me away from my tomboyish ways, or one of Santa's elves was new on the job. I was vaguely insulted, not just by the obvious gender stereotyping, but by the fact they cared so little about my tastes. (*Beano*! *Beano*! When would they learn?) But I was also mystified: what was I supposed to do with it? The stories weren't funny. And what did this pasty-cheeked girl with bad hair, grinning out at me from the cover, want from me? Was she meant to represent me, my likes, my personality? You'd think I might have felt more liking towards someone who clearly shared the same fashion sense as *Minnie the Minx* or Toots from *The Bash Street Kids*, but Minnie the Minx had gumption, whereas if this insipid wonder was as close to Minnie as British girls got, it was as well I lived in



Canada. Promptly abandoning any ideas of running away from home to forge my own, brother-free life in some exotic locale like Paisley, I grabbed the nearest marker pen and gave the girl red pupils and fangs. It improved her looks, but only slightly; she really needed to stop letting her mum buy all her clothes.

Strangely, no annuals with wars, fighter planes, explosions, or other types of violence (all favourites with my brothers) appeared. Stranger still, my brothers didn't seem to mind. But then, I don't think they knew there were such annuals, or they'd likely have felt robbed of a proper childhood (and would still feel that way today–must store up that gem for use this Christmas, right after the family fight breaks out.)

The one exception to the annuals-must-be-funny rule was *Rupert Bear*. Humour was allowed to take a back seat when there were smugglers, magicians, talking fish, malevolent twiggy creatures who leapt out of the woods, gnomes bearing grudges, and an evil Jack Frost. And in the *Rupert* annual, one Christmas-themed story was not only allowed, but delighted in: one of Santa's elves lost in an eerie mist over Nutwood Common, or stashes of lost Christmas parcels found in the hidden passageways of a mansion, could only add to the thrill that accompanied the birth of seasonal-driven retail (or was it the baby Jesus?).

And the annuals were the gift that kept on giving. Every month or so, throughout the year, we'd pull them out, hoping we'd forgotten the stories enough that they'd seem new again. And of course there were last year's annuals, and, as the collection grew, the year before that, and that... plenty of time to almost-forget the stories.

Strangely, I remember very few of our 'big' Christmas presents. What does stand out in my mind as representing the thrill, excitement, and giddiness of Christmas are the comic annuals. Plus, they're the only childhood presents I still own. (And read!)

So this Christmas, remember to give. Annuals. To others, yes, but don't forget to give one - if not several - to yourself. ●

Jody Kihara *is a freelance writer and author of children's novels, who this Christmas plans to re-appropriate all the annuals her brothers quietly filtered away from the parents' house. 'Tis the season, and all...*

THE PERSUADERS!

RETROSPECTIVE

In the autumn of 1971, ITV launched a brand new television series entitled The Persuaders! The series was produced by ATV, the ITV franchise holder for the Midlands; and the man in charge of television production at ATV was former theatrical agent Lew Grade, later to become Lord Grade.

***Stephen Poppitt** takes a detailed look at the popular comic strip of the 1970s ...*

Through ATV's film production subsidiary, *ITC*, Grade had been making television shows since the late 1950s. His goal was quality programmes, suitable for overseas sale, with a particular eye on the highly lucrative American market. In order to sell programmes in that very competitive market, *ITC* had taken the decision, in 1965, to film all of their programmes in colour, even though British television was still broadcasting in black-and-white, since America was to fully adopt colour in 1966.

Another big selling point in America was the use of American actors in the shows. In this respect Grade was nothing if not ambitious. In 1971 he pulled off his first really big coup, contracting Hollywood star Tony Curtis for the new show, which was to be a sequel to *ITC*'s highly successful series *The Saint*, to star alongside Roger Moore, who had played the lead in that earlier show.

The Persuaders! was launched in Britain in a blaze of publicity in the autumn of 1971. It quickly became a popular hit, and its success led Polystyle Publications to begin negotiating to obtain a licence for the right to use the name of the show, its lead characters, and the likenesses of its stars, for a new comic strip.

This strip was to be a big feature of the re-launch, in early 1972, of Polystyle's ailing *Countdown*, which had launched 12 months earlier.

Retitled as *TV Action in Countdown* (and quickly becoming simply *TV Action*), the comic was re-launched with issue 56, dated 11 March 1972. *The Persuaders* strip

featured all-new stories about the two stars of the television show: English aristocrat and playboy Lord Brett Sinclair (played on tv by Roger Moore), and American oil millionaire Danny Wilde (played on tv by Tony Curtis), two members of the international jet-set.

Apart from Sinclair and Wilde, the only continuing character in the tv show was Judge Fulton, played by Laurence Naismith; but he never actually appeared in the strip in *TV Action*, despite being mentioned on many occasions.

It was Fulton who, in the first televised episode, brought the two main characters together on the French Riviera, and blackmailed them into handling an assignment for him.

The strip was initially drawn by Harry Lindfield, who did an excellent job of depicting both Curtis and Moore. Printed in

ABOVE: 'REVOLUTION ROUND-UP' FROM ISSUE 56. THIS EIGHT-PART STORY WAS DRAWN BY FRANK LANGFORD

colour, it ran to three pages each week, usually with a cliff-hanger ending.

The first story, beginning in issue 56, was entitled *A Touch of the Sun*. It ran for ten weeks, and the series was judged sufficiently popular to justify giving it the front cover for the first three weeks. Thereafter, the strip was removed from the cover and reduced to two pages a week.

This first story was perhaps a trifle overlong. But it featured several of the trademark aspects of the television show: an international setting, a main character who was a VIP (in this case, the Regent of the kingdom), and a palace location.

On the whole, it preserved the feel of the television series, although it relied a little heavily on coincidence and luck at several points. And the mysterious Soviet agent disappeared after the >

BELOW: HARRY LINFIELD'S SUPERB SENSE OF LAYOUT AND COLOUR ARE SHOWN IN THIS DOUBLE PAGE SPREAD FROM 'A TOUCH OF SUN'

second week, and neither his presence nor his disappearance was ever explained!

The second story, beginning in issue 66, was entitled *Revolution Round-Up*. This was an eight-part story, with art by Frank Langford, whose style was rather different to Lindfield's, and whose attempt at depicting Curtis and Moore was less successful.

As before, the strip was in colour. But this time it began with just two pages each week, and it was confined to the inside pages, while in the final week the last page was printed in black-and-white.This story was not consistent with the television series. It simply plunged Brett and Danny into the middle of a South American revolution, a situation in which they were not the prime movers of the action, don't resolve the problem, and really have very little to do.

Revolution Round-Up was thus a much less effective story than *A Touch of the Sun*. And the overall impression given by these first two stories, taking into account the strip's removal from the front cover, its reduction in page count, the reassignment of Harry Lindfield to other work, and the sudden loss of colour at the end of week eighteen, is that Polystyle did not think this strip worth much trouble, which suggests that reaction to it was unfavourable.

Quite possibly the television series was simply too sophisticated, and too adult in its humour, to be capable of adaptation as a comic strip. *A Touch of the Sun* almost worked on that level; it projected some of the glamour and jet-set style of the tv show, and employed some of the deception and surprise plot twists. But *Revolution Round-Up* did not work: it was simply a routine run-around, with no plot sophistication; and it contained no recognisable elements of the tv series, save for the mere presence of Wilde and Sinclair.

The third story, entitled *The African Affair*, began in issue 74. A promising start saw Harry Lindfield once again credited as the artist on the strip; and although it remained confined to the inside pages it was once again fully in colour, though it remained just two pages each week.

However, despite the credit on the strip, the artist's style does not much resemble that of Lindfield. It is less detailed; and comparing it with the art on *A Touch of the Sun* there is little similarity: in particular, the faces of Curtis and Moore in *The African Affair* bear almost no resemblance to their appearance in *A Touch of the Sun*. The inevitable conclusion is that this story was not actually drawn by Lindfield.

A new story, entitled *Traitor Trouble*, began in issue 96 and ran for five weeks. As before, it was a two-page strip each week, once more fully in colour. The art on this story was credited to Frank Langford, but this seems unlikely, for the style does not much resemble *Revolution Round-Up*, the earlier story with which Langford was also credited.

Overall the plot was streets ahead of such duds as *Revolution Round-Up* and *The African Affair*.

In fact *Traitor Trouble* more closely resembled the television series than anything since *A Touch of the Sun*.

A new story, entitled *Ghost Town*, began in issue 101. This initially had no credited artist, and its style was very different from the earlier strips. Later installments identified the artist as Jose Ortiz. Sticking with the

BELOW: A SERIES OF PAGES FROM 'THE LAST HOSTAGE', TV ACTION (1974) ARTIST UNKNOWN

THE LAST HOSTAGE
A PERSUADERS STORY
I'M HUNGRY NOW ABOUT SOME DINNER?
CERTAINLY SENOR KLOBE WILL DINE IN HIS ROOM CAR
IT'S NOW OR NEVER
NOT LONG AFTER DANNY HEARS APPROACHING FOOTSTEPS
DANNY MAKES HIS WAY DOWNSTAIRS
SUDDENLY
I'VE COME TO RESIGN OUR BUSINESS ARRANGEMENT
SO FAR SO GOOD
OOF
I SEEM TO HAVE ARRIVED TOO LATE
OH I WASN'T WORRIED ABOUT YOU DANEL BUT YOUR ABSENCE DID RATHER SPOIL MY SHOOTING PARTY
STILL IT TOUCHES ME TO THINK YOU WERE CONCERNED
DANNY DRIVES UNTIL SALVATORE ORDERS HIM TO TURN INTO A FIELD
THAT GUN'S MAKING ME NERVOUS CAN'T YOU PUT IT AWAY NOW?
I'M AFRAID I CANNOT TRUST YOU JUST YET
PATIENCE MR KLOBE
WHEN DO I GET TO MEET THIS GENERAL OF YOURS?
THIS IS WHAT YOU MIGHT CALL A PERSONAL ENTERPRISE
SERGEANT? THE MAN WHO JUST LEFT MY OFFICE I WANT HIM TAILED HIS NAME IS LORD SINCLAIR
BRETT HIRES A AND DRIVES TO SPOT WHERE THE POLICE FOUND GETAWAY CAR
THE INSPECTOR'S THEORY MAKES SENSE THEY MUST HAVE FLOWN OVER THE FRONTIER TO FRANCE
A COUPLE WEEKS ON LORDSHIP'S SHOOT IS JUST WHAT I NEED
ALL PASSENGERS FOR FLIGHT 109 TO LONDON KINDLY BOARD THE DEPARTURE BUSES AT TERMINAL 12 THANK YOU
SO FAR SO GOOD
GENERAL COLONEL SALVATORE IS ABOARD NO TROUBLE
BUT OTHERS HAVE LESS RELAXING HOBBIES TO OCCUPY THEIR MINDS
YOU DID SAY YOU WANTED ENGLISH TEA MR WILDE?
ALMOST TIME TO MAKE MY MOVE
CAN I GET YOU ANYTHING SIR?
TAKE IT NOTE TO THE CAPTAIN

established pattern, it was again confined to the inside pages, and comprised just two pages each week. It ran for five weeks, mostly fully in colour; but part three reverted to printing the final page in black-and-white.

In a new low for the strip, this story had art which rendered both Tony Curtis and Roger Moore unrecognisable in many of the early panels. Once again, the story contained no elements from The Persuaders tv series, and Brett was omitted entirely for long stretches. It became a cowboys-and-indians style runaround, with a cliched plot. It could as easily have been an episode of *Bonanza* or *The High Chaparral*.

The strip then took a new direction in issue 106, with a story entitled *Ancient Traditions*. In a major retrograde step, for the first time it was printed entirely in black-and-white; the cost of printing more than two pages a week in colour was not affordable. But, also for the first time, it was a complete story in a single issue.

For once, the story had no credited artist; and its style was not

TV ACTION 61 (1972)
ART BY HARRY LINDFIELD

recognisably that of any of the artists who had previously worked on the strip.

This story was a big improvement on *Ghost Town*, with elements of the television series reappearing.

A new story began in issue 110, entitled *Deadly Treasure*. This reverted to the established serial format: running for five weeks, with just two pages each week, but fully in colour.

The art was credited again to Jose Ortiz, although it looked rather different in style to the earlier *Ghost Town*. For one thing, throughout this new story Brett and Danny were, for the most part, recognisably Roger Moore and Tony Curtis.

However, aside from the mention of Judge Fulton at the outset, there were no other elements of the television series in this story.

Issue 115 featured another complete story in a single issue; and then a new story, entitled *The Village of Revenge*, began in issue 119 and ran for five weeks. This serial followed the established format of two pages each week, all in colour; and the art was again credited to Jose Ortiz.

For once, there were actually elements of the television series in the story. The plot also featured an imposter posing as a member of the aristocracy, a trademark of the tv show due to episodes such as *The Ozerov Inheritance*.

Issue 124 featured another >

BELOW: COVER AND INTERIOR ART FROM COUNTDOWN 57 (1972). ART BY HARRY LINDFIELD

complete story: a seven-pager entitled 'Who Is Sylvia'. As with the earlier *Ancient Traditions*, this was printed entirely in black-and-white (as indeed were to be all of the complete-in-one-issue stories). The art in this instance was by Michael White, who had not previously worked on the strip.

Double Take, began in issue 126 and ran for five weeks. This proved to be the final *Persuaders* serial in *TV Action*. With art by Jose Ortiz again, it comprised the usual two pages each week, and was printed fully in colour.

This was a very effective story, with genuine links to the tv series, featuring a sinister plot by Soviet agents to replace Danny with a double who looks just like him. This had distinct echos of the televised episodes *That's Me Over There*, in which Danny had posed as Brett, and *Someone Like Me*, in which Brett seemed to have been impersonated by a double.

It was ironic that this was the final *Persuaders* serial, as it was the best since *A Touch of the Sun*, with real connections to the tv series: including genuine humour, Iron Curtain agents, and a sophisticated espionage storyline.

In issue 132 *The Persuaders* strip

TV ACTION 62 (1972)
ART BY HARRY LINDFIELD

returned for the final time, with a complete story in a single issue. Printed entirely in black-and-white, it was the last apperarance of the strip before *TV Action* was cancelled.

There was, however, to be one other *Persuaders* story, although one which it's difficult to place in the chronology of *TV Action*. This appeared in the 1974 *TV Action Annual*, which went on sale in the autumn of 1973. Due to the extremely long lead-time for the production of Annuals, this would have been commissioned during the spring of 1973, when the weekly *TV Action* still had six months or so of life remaining.

Entitled The Last Hostage, this was a seven page strip, complete in itself. It was printed in black-and-white, but with a hideous green tint applied to it, that made all the characters appear faintly billious. No artist was credited on it, and it was not recognisably the work of anyone who had drawn the weekly strip.

Thus *The Persuaders* appeared more or less continuously in *TV Action* from issue 56 to issue 132, over a period of 18 months up to September 1973. And, in point of fact, the strip long outlived the television series, which ran for only 24 episodes between 17 September 1971 and 25 February 1972.

Due to the long lead-time in the publishing industry, it was an unfortunate fact that the first appearance of the strip in *TV Action* only took place on 11 March 1972, a full fortnight after the last televised episode had aired on ITV.

Ultimately, a strip based on a tv series stands or falls by how effectively it mirrors that series; but Polystyle assigned too many writers

and artists to it who were unfamiliar with the television series. And with so few elements of the tv series appearing in the strip, and not helped by the series having been off the air for more than a year in the latter part of *TV Action*'s run, it's hardly surprising that the strip was not well received by readers at the time - myself included!

Ironically, the stories which were closest to the tv series in spirit and artistic style were the very first, *A Touch of the Sun*, and the final serial, *Double Take*, the latter appearing at a point when the strip's cancellation was already a certainty.

TV Action was a small corner of the original merchandising effort based upon the show, and not entirely unsuccessful; but *The Persuaders* was not *Bonanza* or *Man in a Suitcase*, and was not as readily adaptable to the limitations of comic strip storytelling.

Someone with the brilliance and undoubted talent of Harry Lindfield could have done a great job on this strip, to judge by his work on the initial story, *A Touch of the Sun*, and his earlier work in *Countdown* - particularly his *Dr Who* strips.

It's my opinion that the strip was handicapped by the continual reshuffling of artists, none of whom were given long enough on it to make a success of it, and that it was a bitter irony that Jose Ortiz - who, compared to Lindfield, had originally been spectacularly unsuccessful at depicting Curtis and Moore - was doing his best work on the strip in his final serial, and showing signs of finally making a big success of the strip, at a point when *TV Action* was already doomed to cancellation. ●

TV ACTION 110 (1973) ART BY JOSE ORTIZ

BELOW, PREVIOUS PAGE: TV ACTION 120 & 122 (NOTE THE CONTRASTING STYLES OF ARTIST JOSE ORTIZ)
BELOW: ART BY FRANK LANGFORD, JOSE ORTIZ & HARRY LINDFIELD

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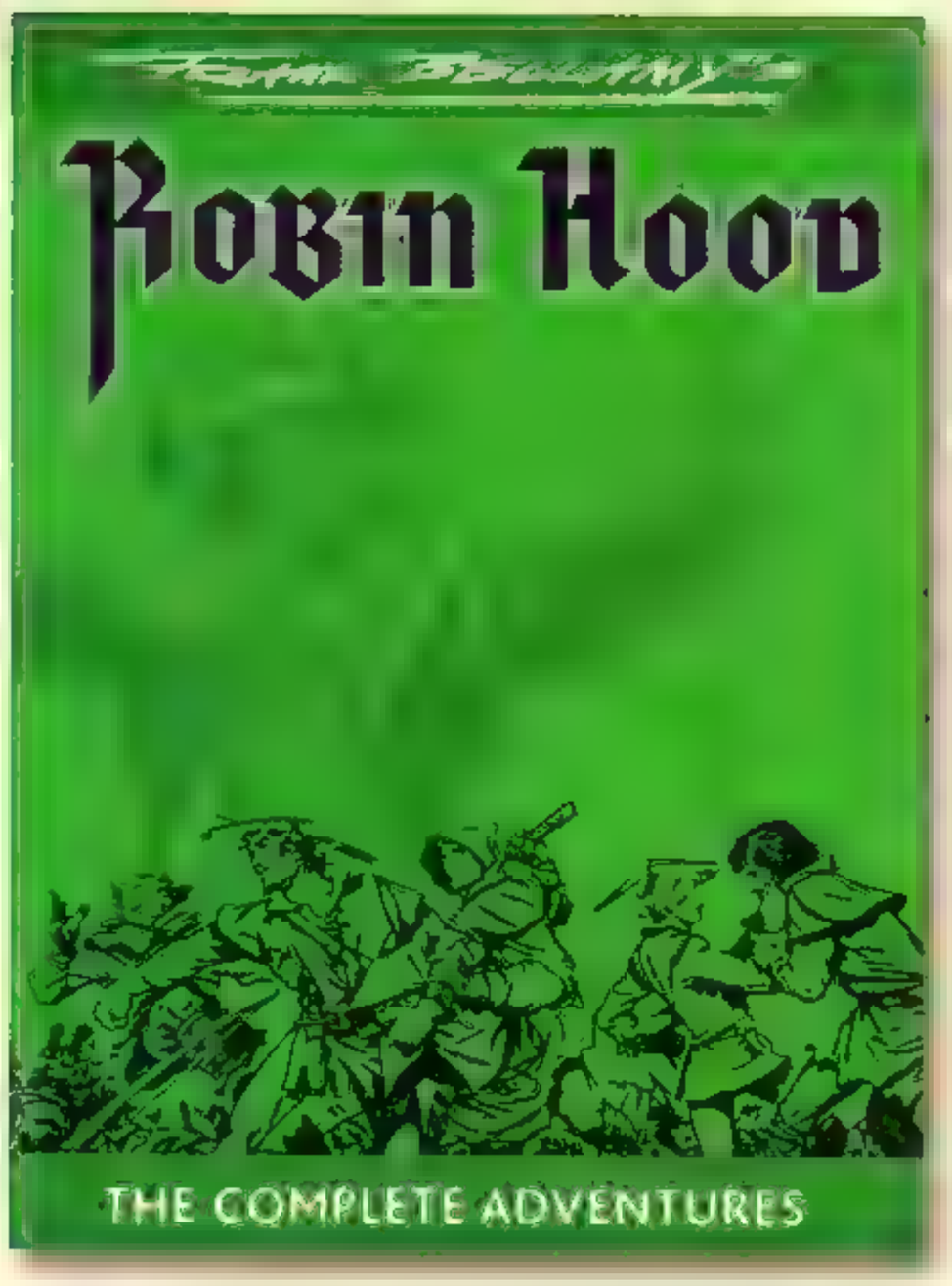

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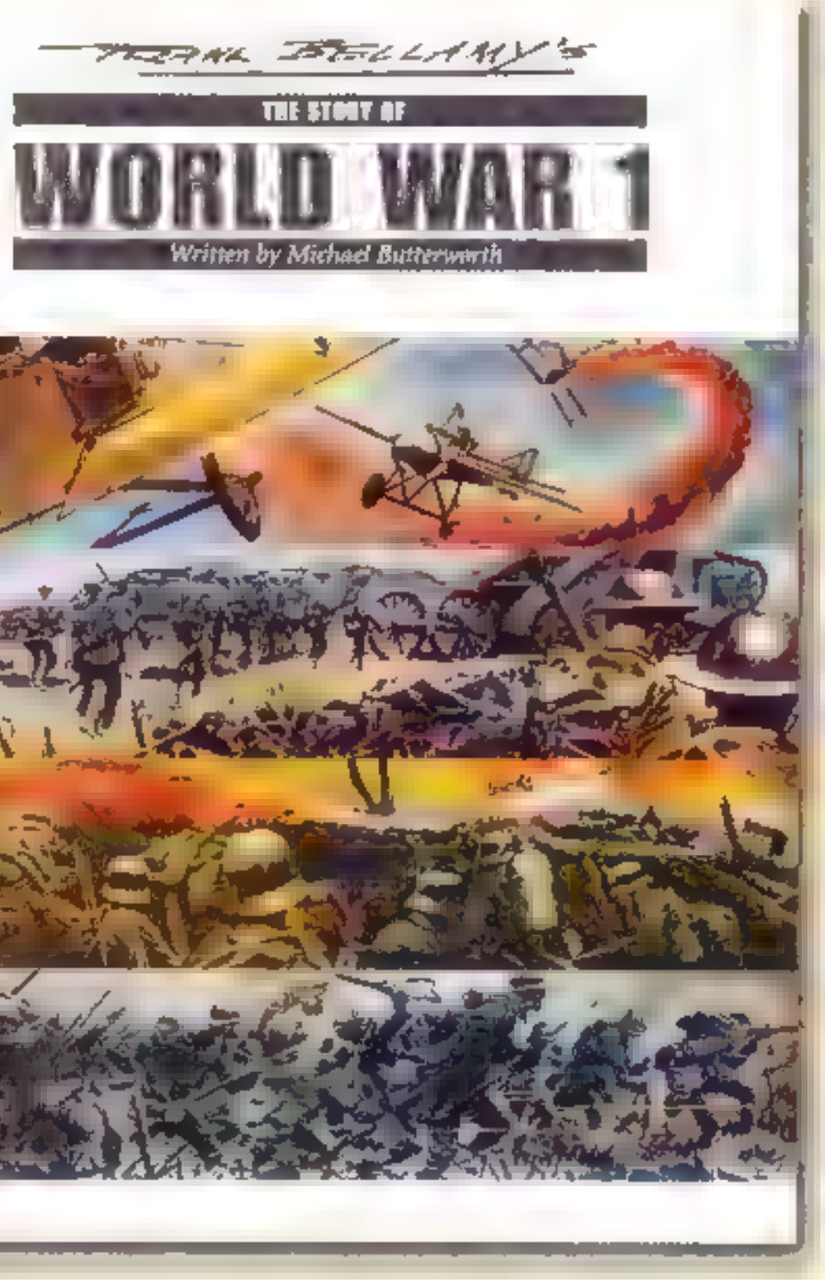

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Doctor Who first burst upon our televison screens back in November 1963 and it seems like he's always been around somewhere. Crikey! *sent* Tony Ingram *back through time to reveal a few little known facts about the good Doctor*

2D ADVENTURES IN THE FOURTH DIMENSION:

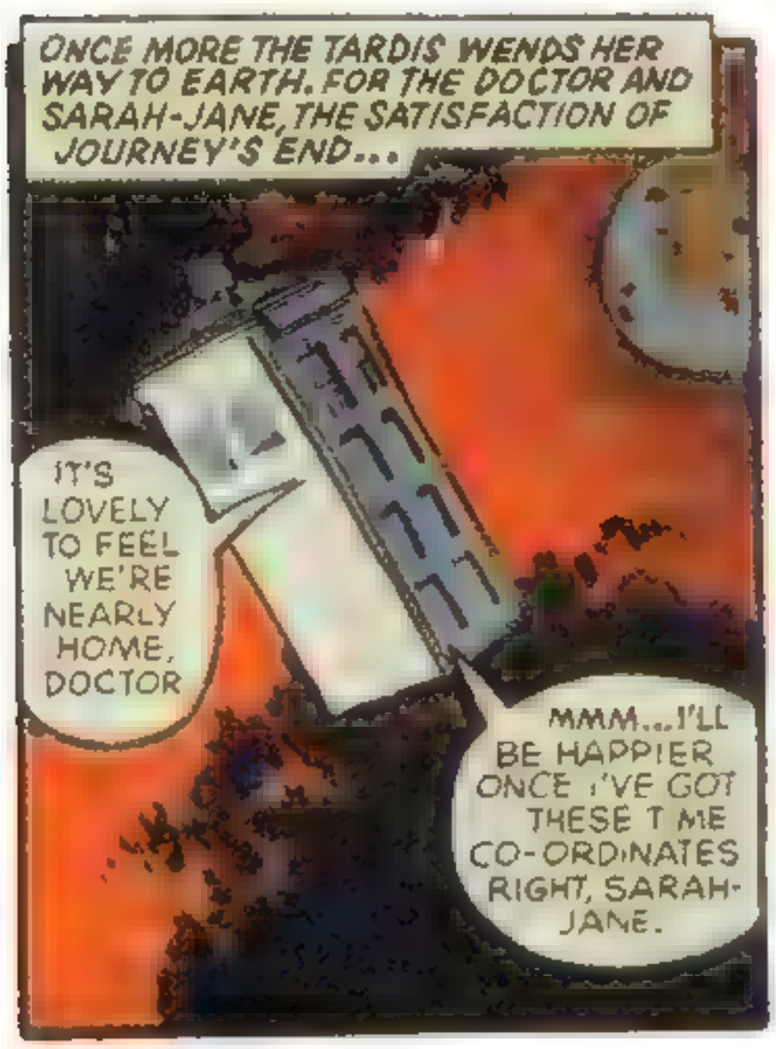
THE COMIC LIFE OF DOCTOR WHO

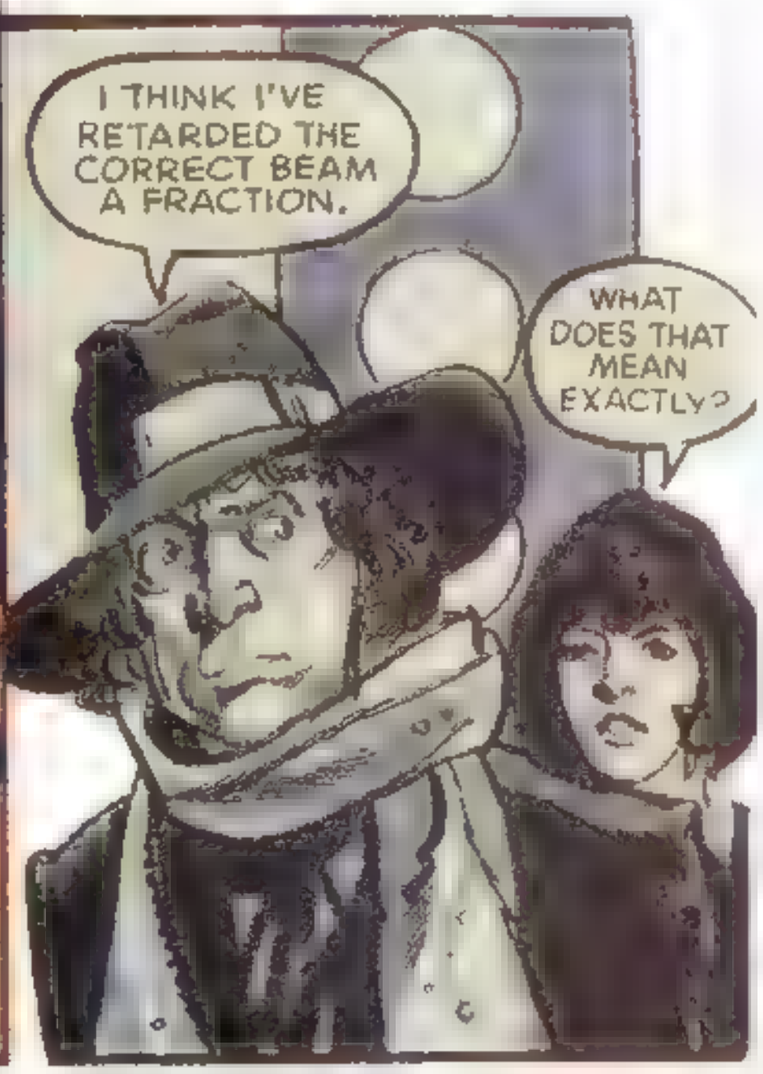
It's fairly well known (except by Stargate fans, apparently; don't ask) that Doctor Who is the world's longest running science fiction series, having notched up a grand total of thirty complete seasons and numerous specials over forty six years on TV so far. But what isn't so well known is that there's another medium in which the good Doctor has been appearing for almost as long-and in a way, even longer! After all, the TV series took a sixteen year break from production. The Doctor Who comic strip, however, just kept on going ..

Doctor Who first materialised in the wonderful world of comics in *TV Comic* (originally published by Beaverbrook, later by Polystyle) on 14 November 1964, just under a year after his television debut. But this Doctor was not precisely the same man we had come to know and love from his monochromatic Saturday night adventures on the BBC. As written and drawn by Neville Main this Doctor, the eccentric grandfather of John and Gillian Who (two supremely annoying brats who accompanied him for the first several years of his *TV Comic* adventures) may have looked vaguely like William Hartnell and flown around time and space in a Police Box, but he was more sorcerer than scientist-complete with a magic bag which, despite its small size, seemed to hold just the right gadget or accessory for every occasion! And the world he inhabited was a decidedly odd one, even by the standards of his TV counterpart.

The world of Neville Main's Doctor Who was a whimsical, storybook fantasyland, populated by the likes of the Kleptons, the robotic Trods (*TV Comic* didn't have permission to use the Daleks, so they created their own equivalent) and the frankly ludicrous Go-Rays; mono wheeled creatures with cartoon like faces, including one who wore a variation on a British police uniform complete with >

(BELOW) 'WODEN'S WARRIORS' ART BY JOHN M BURNS


ONCE MORE THE TARDIS WENDS HER WAY TO EARTH. FOR THE DOCTOR AND SARAH-JANE, THE SATISFACTION OF JOURNEY'S END...
IT'S LOVELY TO FEEL WE'RE NEARLY HOME, DOCTOR
MMM...I'LL BE HAPPIER ONCE I'VE GOT THESE TIME CO-ORDINATES RIGHT, SARAH-JANE.

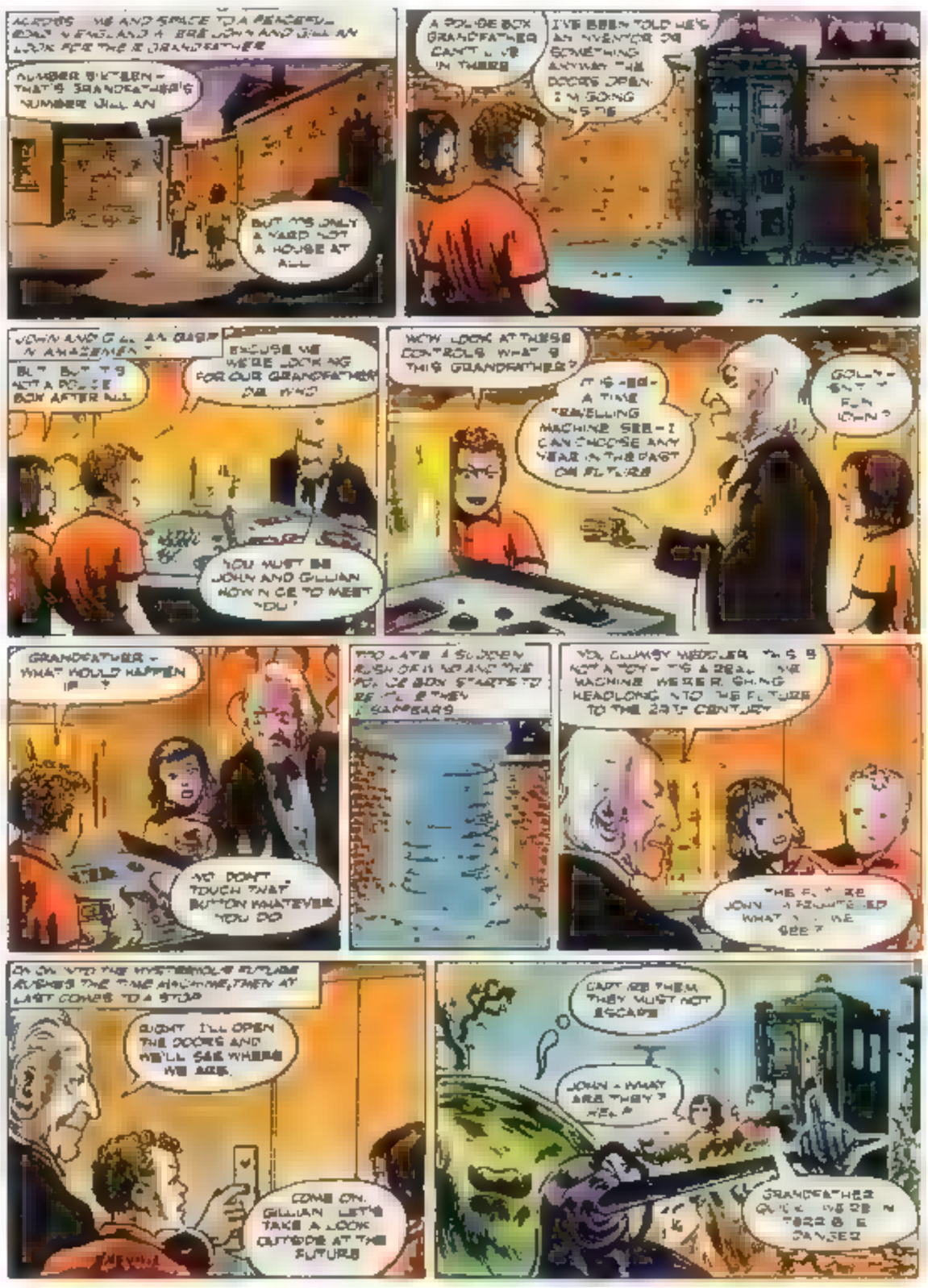


helmet and truncheon! The astute reader will by now have realised that these stores were not exactly in tune with the tone of the parent series (which at the time was arguably more intelligently written and 'adult' than at many later points in its history) and were very definitely aimed at the Doctor's younger fans. Still, they have a curious charm which makes them an enjoyable read even today. After awhile, Main moved on to pastures newer and marginally saner illustrating the adventures of Steed and Mrs Peel, while Bill Mevin took over the Who strip. Things began to settle down a bit then, but whether under Main or Mevin, this was not the Doctor Who of Saturday teatime viewing. William Hartnell was never called upon to help out Father Christmas when the kiddies' presents were in danger of not being delivered on time...

DOCTOR
WHO
WHAT A BARREN PLACE I'M GLAD I TOLD THE CHILDREN TO STAY INSIDE THE TARDIS!
A LITTLE LATER
THE MOUNTAIN SIDE IS WARM. THIS IS PROBABLY AN ACTIVE VOLCANO. AT THE FIRST SIGN OF A TREMOR I MUST MAKE FOR COVER
INTRUDERS! SOMEBODY HAS LANDED ON OUR PLANET
IN AN UNDERGROUND LABORATORY
A SPACE TRAVELLER IS INVESTIGATING MY MOUNTAIN. HE MUST NOT WARN THE UNIVERSE OF WHAT LIES INSIDE THE VOLCANO
WE WILL SEIZE HIM
SOON I SHALL HOLD ALL THE KNOWN PLANETS TO RANSOM. THAT INQUISITIVE SPACE TRAVELLER MUST BE ALLOWED TO SPOIL MY PLANS
THIS IS AN EXCITING MOMENT. IT IS NOT UNUSUAL FOR ME TO GET INSIDE A VOLCANO. NORMALLY MY FEET WOULD BE BURNED
THE LEDGE SEEMS TO BE COOLER THAN THE BOILING HOT SIDES. IT LOOKS MAN-MADE

ABOVE: JOHN CANNING'S SECOND DOCTOR IN ACTION. BELOW: THE DOCTOR'S COMIC STRIP INTRODUCTION, COURTESY OF NEVILLE MAIN

By 1966, the TV series had moved on, and the Doctor Who comic strip had to move on with it-although, predictably, not necessarily in exactly the same direction. The young readership, perhaps a bit older and a bit more sophisticated now, wanted a more sensible, believable Who strip and mercifully they got it-thanks to the arrival of an anonymous new scripter and of artist John Canning. Canning's first run would take in three Doctors in all, but he is perhaps best known in Who circles as the definitive second Doctor artist! Admittedly, there were still odd little touches in the strips which would have looked somewhat out of place in the TV show (the second Doctor-whose change of appearance is not remarked upon in the strip-has seemingly lost his magic bag but has acquired a lighter which shoots laser beams. I never even knew he smoked!) But this is the period which began to finally reconcile the two versions to some extent. Having finally gotten shot of John and Gillian (who, having grown up a bit, left to go to university on the improbably named planet Zebadee) in 1967 the Doctor gained a new foil in TV companion Jamie McCrimmon. The rights issues having apparently been resolved, the intrepid pair thereafter battled not only new TV foes the Cybermen and the Quarks (minus their Dominator overlords) but also the Daleks; indeed, for a time the strip was actually renamed 'Dr Who & the Daleks', even when the mutated metal meanies weren't being featured in it! In a wonderful twist, at one point early in Canning's run the Doctor, John and Gillian actually have to save the few remaining members of the Trod race, their old foes having been massacred by the Daleks who presumably felt that imitation may well have been the sincerest form of flattery but it was also a bit of a bloody liberty.


NUMBER SIXTEEN - THAT'S GRANDFATHER'S NUMBER GILLIAN
BUT IT'S ONLY A YARD NOT A HOUSE AT ALL
A POLICE BOX GRANDFATHER CAN'T LIVE IN THERE
I'VE BEEN TOLD HE'S AN INVENTOR OR SOMETHING. ANYWAY THE DOORS OPEN I'M GOING IN
EXCUSE ME WE'RE LOOKING FOR OUR GRANDFATHER DR. WHO
BUT BUT IT'S NOT A POLICE BOX AFTER ALL
YOU MUST BE JOHN AND GILLIAN NOW I'M GLAD TO MEET YOU
NOW LOOK AT THESE CONTROLS. WHAT'S THIS GRANDFATHER?
IT IS - ER - A TIME TRAVELLING MACHINE SEE - I CAN CHOOSE ANY YEAR IN THE PAST OR FUTURE
GOLLY - ISN'T FUN DOWN?
GRANDFATHER - WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF -?
NO DON'T TOUCH THAT BUTTON WHATEVER YOU DO
TOO LATE A SUDDEN RUSH OF WIND AND THE POLICE BOX STARTS TO RE-MATERIALISE THEY DISAPPEARS
YOU CLUMSY MEDDLER. THIS IS NOT A TOY - IT'S A REAL TIME MACHINE WE'RE RACING HEADLONG INTO THE FUTURE TO THE 23rd CENTURY
THE FUTURE JOHN - I'M TERRIFIED WHAT WILL WE SEE?
OH NO, NOT THE MYSTERIOUS FUTURE AGAIN! THE TIME MACHINE, THEN AT LAST COMES TO A STOP
RIGHT I'LL OPEN THE DOORS AND WE'LL SEE WHERE WE ARE.
COME ON, GILLIAN LET'S TAKE A LOOK OUTSIDE AT THE FUTURE
CAN'T SEE THEM. THEY MUST NOT ESCAPE
JOHN - WHAT ARE THEY? REAL?
GRANDFATHER QUICK WE'RE IN DANGER

Probably the oddest-although also arguably the most fascinating-story of Canning's tenure though, is the final second Doctor strip. On TV, Patrick Troughton's Doctor had been captured by his own race, the hitherto unsuspected 'Time Lords' at the end of epic storyline 'The War Games' and sentenced to have his appearance changed and be exiled to Earth. Trouble was, the new Doctor had yet to be seen and the next series was months away, while the comic strip had to continue in the meantime. So in an ingenious bit of continuity tweaking, the TV Comic writers concocted a story arc which had the second Doctor

exiled to Earth for a few months without the changed appearance, operating out of a London hotel-and in that final story, he is called upon to investigate sinister walking scarecrows who ultimately turn out to be agents of the Time Lords, sent to drag him away to be forcibly regenerated- the second, 'deferred' part of his sentence! A very definite case of ingenuity in the face of adversity, and one which has since been unofficially adopted by some sections of Who fandom as a means of explaining away certain inconsistencies in the TV show itself when Troughton's Doctor later reappeared for a guest shot seeming to remember events that could not possibly otherwise have happened to him yet...

Canning continued to draw the strip after the arrival of Jon Pertwee's third Doctor in 1970, and it gradually began to actually resemble the TV show for which it was somewhat optimistically named (well, a bit, anyway) with the Doctor now working for the British establishment and with even the show's Brigadier Lethbridge Stewart making the odd appearance.

JOHN PERTWEE'S DOCTOR AS ILLUSTRATED BY HARRY LINFIELD

But in early 1971, everything changed. Polystyle launched a new publication aimed at a slightly older readership, 'Countdown', later to be retitled 'Countdown for TV Action', 'TV Action incorporating Countdown', 'TV Action + Countdown' and finally just 'TV Action', and in amongst the plethora of strips mostly based on Gerry Anderson's various puppet superstars sat Doctor Who, comfortably ensconced in a new home far more in keeping with his serious new image (the early Canning third Doctor strips retained a humorous touch very definitely absent from the TV show at that time, which had launched itself into the 70's and into colour with a Quatermass style serious sci-fi approach).

This, some would argue (and with good reason) was the real Golden Age of Doctor Who in comics, at least in terms of the art. The Who strip, written by Dennis Hooper and initially drawn by Harry Lindfield, was now a hard edged sci-fi thriller series, beautifully painted, with the Doctor now living in a country cottage (the idea of the Doctor owning property on Earth was later revisited in a few of the Virgin Doctor Who New Adventures novels published in the 90's) and working as a freelance investigator for the government. With Lindfield's departure, Frank Langford briefly took over, but it was with the arrival of Gerry Haylock that the strip really took off. A master at depicting action scenes and capturing Pertwee's likeness perfectly, Haylock has never really been bettered as a Doctor Who strip artist. As the strip >

BELOW: CLASSIC ART FROM THE PAGES OF TV ACTION & COUNTDOWN

THE DALEK INVASION OF AMERICA

ANYWHERE IN THE UNIVERSE... AT ANY TIME!
I--I DON'T UNDERSTAND!
YOU'LL SEE
I'VE NEVER SEEN A JUNGLE LIKE THAT BEFORE
A PERFECTED JUNGLE

While the Doctor's comic strip adventures began in Britain in 1964, it would take a little longer for the character to gain a comic book presence in the USA. In fact, the strip adventures of television's favourite Time Lord didn't cross the channel until 1980, when the first two lead strips from the British Doctor Who Weekly were reprinted in Marvel Premiere #57-60.

Strictly speaking though, this was not the first time a comic titled Doctor who had been published in the States. In 1966, Dell Comics published Doctor Who & the Daleks, a standalone comic book adaptation of the 1965 Amicus movie of the same name, which had itself been an adaptation of the original 1963 BBC TV serial which introduced the Daleks! The movie, however, took a number of liberties with the story which were consequently carried over to the comic.

In this version, Doctor Who-his real name, it seems-is a human inventor (played on screen by Peter Cushing) who travels to the Dalek planet of Skaro in his home made time machine TARDIS with his granddaughters Barbara and Susie and Barbara's boyfriend Ian (Roy Castle).

In the original TV story of course, Susan (who was some years older than the 12 year old Susie) was the Doctor's only granddaughter, and Ian and Barbara two of her schoolteachers.

The Dell Comics version (left), which was faithful to the movie continuity, was drawn by Dick Giordano and his brother-in-law Sal Trapani (The writer is unknown). ●

> progressed, elements from the TV show crept in; the Master, the Time Lords and even the Daleks once again. But brilliant though these stories-and the comic-were, they were also expensive both to produce and to purchase, and by late 1973 TV Action was gone. Homeless, the Doctor went knocking humbly on TV Comic's door again and was magnanimously welcomed back. With TV Comic #1204, the fourth Doctor arrived (now accompanied by TV companion Sarah Jane Smith) but after one strip featuring this new Doctor, Gerry Haylock departed for reasons best known to himself. Sadly, in later years Haylock has seemed to have little affection for the Who strips he drew. He was replaced by Martin Asbury, who turned in two pretty good stories, one of them featuring the Time Lords (whose home planet of Gallifrey was inexplicably renamed 'Jewel' for the occasion) but Asbury moved on to draw Garth for the Daily Mirror. Only one man could come to the Doctor's rescue: re-enter John Canning!

ABOVE: THE DOCTOR'S POPULARITY LED TO HIM GETTING HIS OWN MIGHTY TV COMIC WINTER SPECIAL IN 1977

Unfortunately, whilst still engaging, Canning's work on these later strips sometimes seemed rushed and rather lacking its earlier polish, and the scripts too began to become somewhat mediocre (even after the arrival of new TV companion Leela, who sadly took to wearing jeans and a jumper in the strip rather than her trademark skimpy animal skins; presumably Polystyle were worried about corrupting the kiddies with all that bare flesh). Finally, in TV Comic #1385 the strip dried up completely. No new stories were published; instead, readers were fobbed off with reprints of some of Canning's second Doctor strips, with Troughton's head redrawn as Tom Baker's and a scarf added! It was all highly unsatisfactory, it couldn't last-and it didn't. On the 12 May 1979, Doctor Who departed from TV Comic's pages for the last time, but the strip's salvation was in the offing. Five months later, on 17 October 1979, the Doctor returned in a brand new strip adventure in the first issue of Marvel Comics UK's Doctor Who Weekly, the brainchild of editor Dez Skinn-and the strip hasn't looked back since! ●

TO BE CONTINUED...

There are the greats and there are the not so greats. Frank McDiarmid falls squarely into the first category. Frank's comic career began over 50 years ago and he worked regularly for the two giants in British comics publishing–DC Thomson and Fleetway–throughout that period. Crikey! *took time out to speak to one of comicdoms top talents .*

THE FRANK McDIARMID INTERVIEW

CONDUCTED BY PAUL SQUIRES

Summer 2009 and the economy is in freefall. With massive unemployment, food and energy prices soaring, fears about mortgages, family budgets, credit card debt and job security ...its hard to believe this is modern day Britain!

The last time the country was in such a pickle was back in the 1970's.

Back then kids had little idea of financial worries. Youngsters had comics to take their minds off the gloom and doom–DC Thomson led the way with their staple titles of *Beano*, *Dandy*, *Topper*, and *Beezer* and up and coming Fleetway had a whole raft of titles: *Buster, Monster Fun, Whoopee, Whizzer and Chips, Shiver and Shake, Cor! Krazy...* and *Cheeky*.

Krazy comic, launched in October 1976, has become a neat little collectable, with its crazy stories and mocking of the 'grown up'–it was easier to forget the doom and gloom in the pages silly stories and characters in the paper.

Perhaps a little edgier than anything that had gone before, *Krazy* was a colourful weekly, with loopy guides and a 'disguise' on the back cover so the comic could be hidden, or read secretly in class and all manner of improbable scenarios.

FRANK TAKES TIME OUT TO FOLLOW ANOTHER PASSION: PAINTING

The comic introduced us to characters such strip such as *The 12 1/2 p Buytonic Boy*, who had bought a tonic from a tramp and turned into a latter day 'bionic' boy. *Birdman and Chicken*, a 'Krazy' version of Marvels 'caped crusaders', magician Ray Presto, Handy Andy who was... well quite a useful sort, and of course *The Krazy Gang*–the lead strip.

Drawn originally by Ian Knox–the story featured a motley crew of kids called Ed, Blue (who was actually a parrot) Liz, Sporty, Brainy, a weird flying alien 'Freaky' and of course the goofy punster himself, Cheeky.

Krazy town was their home, and each story would have the gang meeting various other characters.

Cheeky himself had his own strip ('Ello Its Cheeky!') which allowed the character to show his puntastic charm and wit–and led him to become arguably the paper's most prominent star.

Sadly, Krazy lasted just a whole eighteen months (continuing as an annual for several years until 1985) but as Cheeky had proved he had legs (and teeth) he was given his very own comic–*Cheeky Weekly* in October 1977.

Cheeky continued a similar theme as originated in *Krazy*, albeit losing the gang (who went on to appear in their own weekly strip in *Whizzer and Chips*). Several original characters remained in the new strip entitled Cheeky's week. Waiter Wurx (with his uncontrollable bladder) and Pongo Snodgrass (the smelliest boy on earth) were among some

old favourites to remain in the pages, however Cheeky was now a little different.

Each week the comic would follow Cheeky through his week, with other stories popping in as other characters interacted with him such as the Six Million Dollar Gran on television, or the Skateboard Squad who invariably almost sent Cheeky flying.

Drawing duties had now been passed to Frank McDiarmid, one of the most prolific artists of the era. He injected his madcap humour into an anarchic but beautifully drawn mash of ideas, strips and gags and injected the strip with a host of new bizarre characters and showcased a variety of jokes and terrible puns. The comics are great fun to read, with jokes around the strip boxes, weird notes to the readers and all sorts of crazy new characters.

Some of these included Baby Burpo, a belching nappified toddler, Baker's Boy, who would lose a cake if he failed to guess Cheeky's pun. Gunga Jim–a hip Indian kid, a rolling *Knock Knock* door on wheels which cracked wince inducing jokes. Lily Pop–the sexiest traffic warden ever, Manhole Man–who would share a joke with his customary "Oi!" (with his head popping through a man hole!). Bump Bump Bernie–an accident prone kid wrapped in bandages, Crunching Chris–a boy with the tendency to eat loudly. Crystal Belle who would make predictions with her fortune telling skills and Jogging Jeremy, an unfit skinny jogging weakling, and many, many more.

Cheeky and his pet snail (who even had his own section–Snail of the Century) is an incredible

comic–but what is even more unbelievable is much of the work was drawn by one man; the afore mentioned Frank McDiarmid.

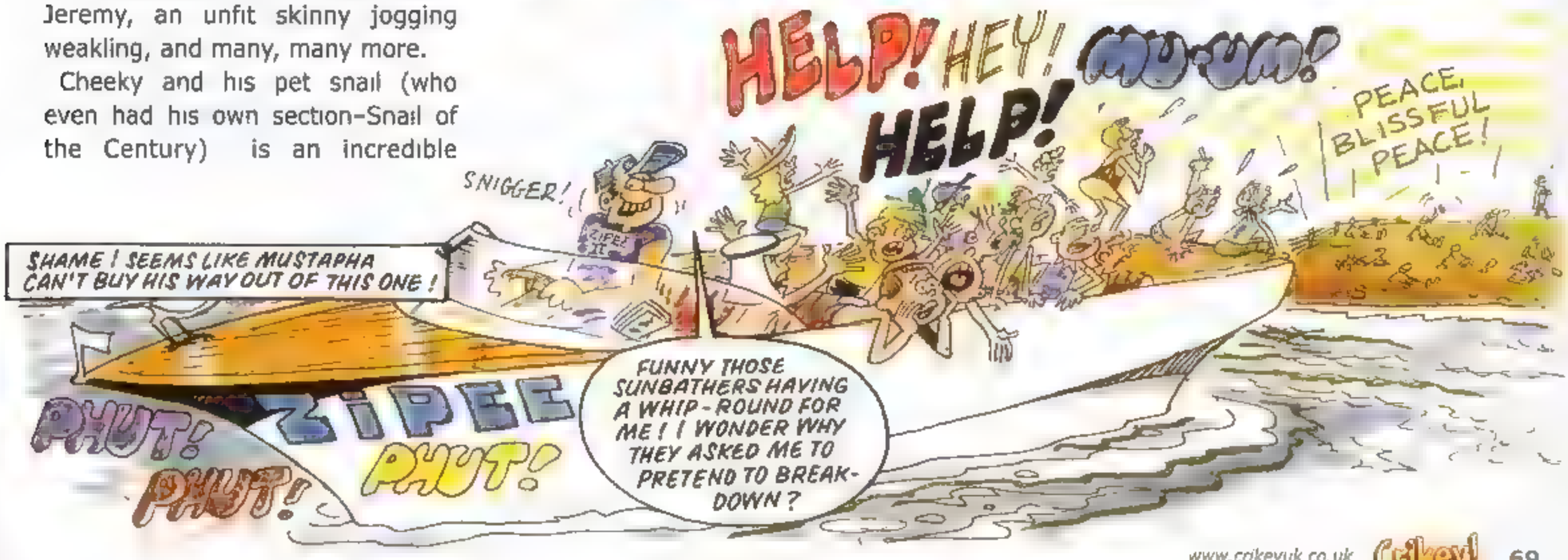
Born in 1935, Frank was a keen artist. After a spell in the RAF, Frank noticed an advert in the Sunday Post asking 'Can you make people laugh with your drawings?'

The advert was placed by Dundee based comic giants DC Thomson. Within a short space of time Frank had joined the team, progressed through their ranks and joined Fleetways burgeoning team of artists. After working on many of the key titles of the era he was rewarded with *Cheeky*–a title he virtually ran single handedly.

The comic appeared until April 1978 when it merged with *Whoopee!* in 1980. The character 'Cheeky' continued to be seen sporadically in the comic before its final issue in 1985.

With the comic industry in decline, Frank continued working on these diminishing titles. When the final death knell tolled he was forced to diversify, taking his work into fine art, running his own gallery, and drawing caricatures.

Frank is based in Arbroath near Dundee, and I contacted him wanting to catch up on what he was up to now, and tweak his memory of those halcyon times at Fleetway. As a kid I loved those titles and remember looking forward each year to getting my annuals each Christmas, *Cheeky* and *Krazy* being among my favourites. >


HELP! HEY! MU-UM!
HELP!
PEACE, BLISSFUL PEACE!
SNIGGER!
ZIPEE IT
SHAME ! SEEMS LIKE MUSTAPHA CAN'T BUY HIS WAY OUT OF THIS ONE !
PHUT! PHUT!
ZIPEE PHUT!
FUNNY THOSE SUNBATHERS HAVING A WHIP-ROUND FOR ME ! I WONDER WHY THEY ASKED ME TO PRETEND TO BREAK-DOWN ?

I spoke to Frank by phone where I outlined my plan for an interview for *Crikey!* readers to enjoy.

Frank gladly agreed and we exchanged details and set a date for our meeting. Prior to this I received a small packet. Opening it I noticed the Scottish postmark: inside Frank had sent me a beautiful drawing of 'Cheeky'–circa 2009. And he looks good for his age!

What follows is my conversation with Frank McDiarmid–one of the best loved artists of the Fleetway generation. Frank is an affable humorous chap, so sit back and enjoy this rare opportunity to hear from one of the UK 's finest comic artists!

A STUNNINGLY REALISTIC RENDITION OF OUR INTREPID INTERVIEWER PAUL SQUIRES, BY FRANK

Frank McDiarmid:

I worked first at DC Thomsons, who were responsible for the *Beano* and *Dandy*, they were massive. They had some great talent working there. I spent my time from 1955 to 1966 working for them, and soaked up as much as I could from them. The first strip of any consequence I worked on was following on from Ken Reid at the *Dandy*, it was a story called 'Big Head and Thick Head', from 1962 to 1966. I followed in the footsteps of many well known artists, Douglas Phillips, who drew 'I flew with Braddock' and Fred Sturrock who was well known for his illustrations.

Paul Squires: *Were you just working on comic characters back then?*

Frank: No... at the same time I managed to get into the straight art market, in titles such as *Rover*, *Hotspur*, *Wizard* and *Adventure*. I was doing sport, adventure, spy stories for Thomsons then... in those days there was a block illustration followed by two or three pages of prose. I did quite a few covers in those Boys papers.

Working at Thomsons the mentality was that it was a job for life, and if you stayed with them you'd never need to work for anyone else. But I had to spread my wings, I knew there was so much more I could do...

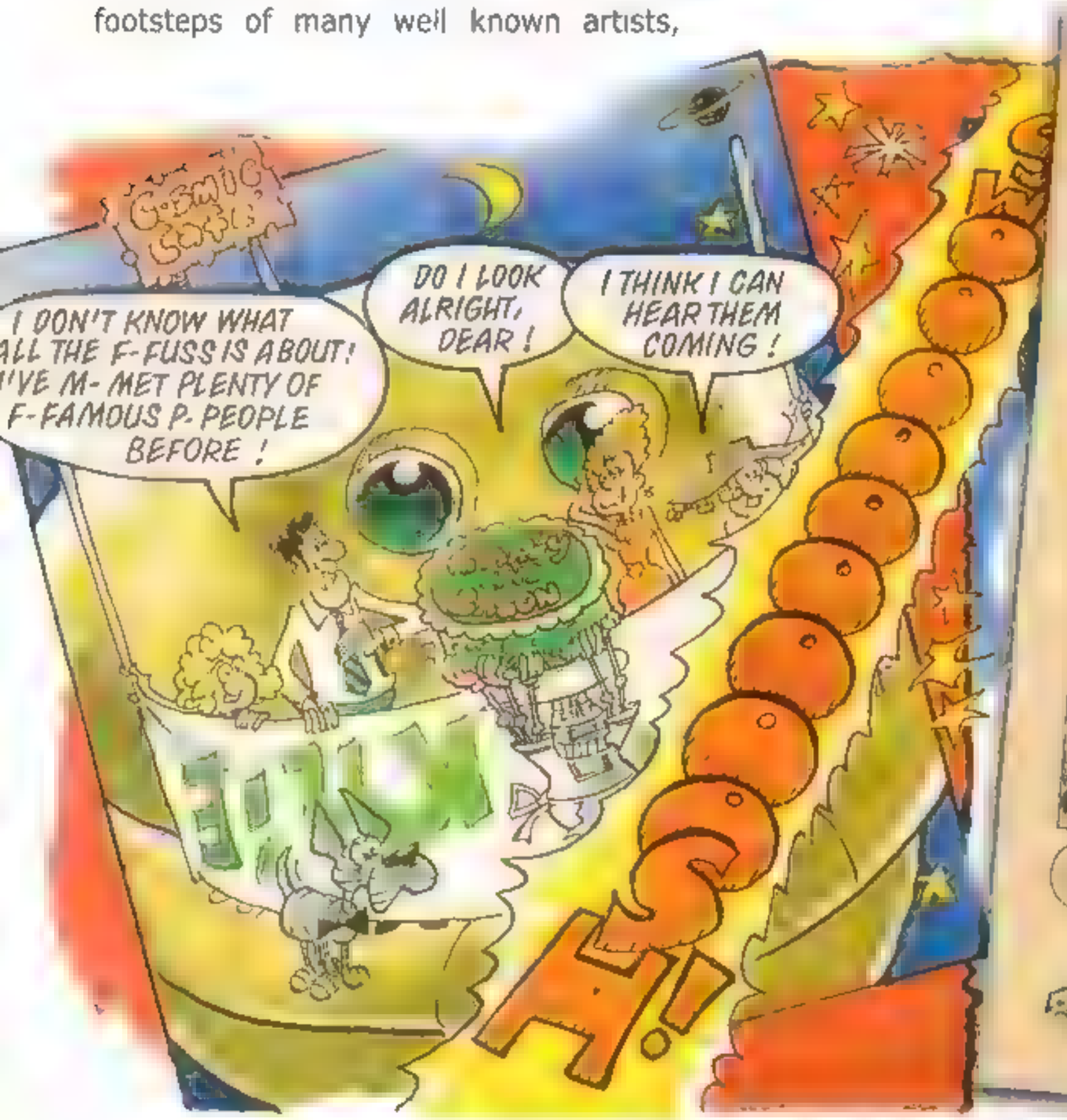
So after eleven years I got a bit restless, and asked if I could work at home, which quite a few artists did. They gave that short shrift, and said they'd prefer the idea to come from them.

PS: *So your request to have some time working at home wasn't taken well?*

Frank: They were quite dogmatic in a lot of ways, R D Low was in charge at the time, and it was his way or no way. He was the man behind the main characters, and invented *Desperate Dan* and *Lord Snooty*, and had been there since the very beginning of the comics.

PS: *So this spurred you to look elsewhere for work?*

Frank: Well I decided to go to London with some samples in my Spring holiday, just to see what the response was. In


GOBWUG GOBS!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT ALL THE F-FUSS IS ABOUT! I'VE M-MET PLENTY OF F-FAMOUS P-PEOPLE BEFORE!
DO I LOOK ALRIGHT, DEAR!
I THINK I CAN HEAR THEM COMING!
AHOOO

those days, Fleetway were just taking off with a whole stable of comics, and they loved what they saw. They gave me every encouragement and they had lots of work for me.

PS: *The Fleetway comics covered all sorts of titles ... Lion, Tiger, Valiant, and the funnies such as Wham, Pow Buster and eventually Whoopee and Whizzer and Chips... can you remember any of the strips you drew?*

Frank: I became a freelance artist, and in 1973 did *Roger the Dodger*. I worked on lots of characters through the years. I did four years of *Texas Ted* in *TV Comic* and a year and half on *Eagle* in the early 1970's. I worked on *Boy Boss, Mustapha Million, Cruncher, The Gasworks Gang, Frankie Stein*, and war comics such as *Battle* and many others...

PS: *But you are best remembered for Cheeky?*

Frank: Well I came on the scene when *Cheeky* was singled out for stardom. Bob Paynter, Fleetway's Group Editor asked me to do it. Bobs idea when *Cheeky* emerged was that they'd use as much of my stuff as they could, seven pages a week.

Bob said that I should drop Roger and concentrate on working for them... I said no. I had worked hard and I didn't want to put all my eggs in one basket. This overlapped the *Cheeky* period, and occasionally artists would stand in for me.

PS: *At least a third of Cheeky was drawn by you?*

Frank: Oh aye... easily... I'd say two thirds!

PS: *Who was your favourite character?*

Frank: I dont know... there was 'Posh Claude' and 'Lily Pop'. They're all dear to me.

My favourite strip was *Cheeky* by a mile, we were encouraged to be anarchic and wild. I can still draw most of the characters from memory... and there were a lot of them!

PS: *And the snail..?*

Frank: That was my idea. I was given a free hand–in fact encouraged to come up with this stuff. Those characters 'Bubble Gum Boy', 'Libby and Disco Kid', 'Auntie Daisy' and 'Walter Wurx'.They were all good fun!

PS: *Who did the jokes?*

Frank: I'm glad you mention that, in the strip he was referred to as 'Willie Cook', but in fact he was a defectee from Thomsons–full name of Gordon Cook–he came up with all the bare bones. I was in charge of coming up with all the scenes and things that were going on, the rubbish written in between–anything that would make it look different.

PS: *How big were the pages?*

Frank: It was one and half sizes bigger than the comic, and was mechanically reduced down in London. The strips were drawn in pencil and then inked–but given the pressure of the work I was given a free hand and to go straight ahead, there was no requirement to show them.

PS: *And the captions and speech bubbles?*

Frank: That was done down there by whoever. I never really did find out who did them. >

DESERT ISLAND DICK
BET YOU THINK I'M MAD GIVING ALL MY FOOD TO THIS BIRD WELL, JUST WAIT- I'M GOING TO GET IT TO TEACH ME HOW TO FLY
LATER-
H'M - YES, I THINK I'VE GOT THAT!
YIPPEE! I SHOULD BE ABLE TO FLY ANY TIME NOW.
AH! LOOK WHAT THE TIDE'S LEFT - A BOOK ABOUT BIRDS! WONDER IF THIS ONE'S IN IT?
YES HIS PICTURE'S HERE I'LL SEE WHAT THE BOOK SAYS ABOUT HIM.
THIS IS THE GREAT BEADY-EYED TWISTER, A BIRD THAT IS COMPLETELY UNABLE TO FLY. WHAT!
SWINDLER!

(BELOW): DESERT ISLAND DICK. (RIGHT): MUSTAPHAMILLION, A STRIP SO POPULAR IT OUTLASTED EVEN CHEEKY BY SEVERAL YEARS

PS: *It must be weird drawing a strip without seeing the text bubbles!*

Frank: I'll tell you what's weirder: I only met Bob Paynter about three times in my life. And yet he was the fountain head for all this nonsense that I was producing and having a great time!

PS: *How did you feel at the time seeing your work on display in newsagents up and down the country?*

Frank: (*laughs*) It was a gloriously happy time! *Cheeky* was my favourite to work on–a particular pleasure to draw because of the freedom I was given, I still have a slim volume of fan mail from back then.

PS: *Was it well paid?*

Frank: Working for Fleetway was a cracking living. I'll tell you something for nothing–I found some paperwork from the seventies, and I was earning more than Ted Heath was to run the country!

PS: *I remember the Cheeky annuals fondly–especially the one with Cheeky waving the letter 'P' at Walter Wurx!*

Frank: That was you that kept buying all those annuals then! (*laughs*)

PS: *Did you think back then that people thirty years on would be collecting and cherishing your work?*

Frank: Well no I didn't, comics didn't

come under the heading of collectables back then, I think when something disappears a whole generation is left regretting it. I had *Eagles* for years, and they went. You know how much they are worth now !

PS: *How did Cheeky comic end?*

Frank: The whole *Cheeky* strip shrank and eventually ended up two pages in a merged comic (*Whoopee!*) which was not a healthy sign. In the meantime I was nursing my wife through a terminal illness of cancer–it was a 24 hour job. I was physically exhausted and the work suffered. Once *Cheeky* was finished it was only my work on *Roger the Dodger* keeping me working.

Thomsons were very much bound to 'polls' and would ask their readers who their favourite characters were. Roger was looking a bit tired, so they so they chose to give it to someone else. So I was left without any work.

PS: *So when the comics finished what did you turn to?*

Frank: I'd always worked from home ever since 1966. Apart from seven years when I was running my own small gallery. I got involved in fine art, just as well as if I was relying on comics I'd be on the street by now. The only vestige I've kept is my caricature paintings. It was a very busy period–working all hours, drawing in the shop, and picture framing too...

PS: *And you're still working, drawing caricatures and portraits?*

Frank: Yes I'm still working... I produce caricature in full colour, I ask customers to provide as much details (or dirt) about

WILLIE BUNK
IN
SPACE INVADER
SAM'S ARCADE
VROOOOM!!
H-E-L-P
ON NO, TROUBLE AT SAM'S ASH ARCADE
THE GANG FORCED ME TO HANDOVER MY TAKINGS, WILLIE AND THEY'VE SMASHED ALL MY SPACE-GAME MACHINES UP!
WILLIE QUICKLY LIFTED THE ORDER
IF THIS KEEPS HAPPENING, LAD, MAY HAVE TO CLOSE DOWN!
THE MARKS LEADING TO BEACON CAVES THEY MUST HAVE COME THIS WAY
NOPE NOT SAM PHONE THE POLICE WHILE I LOOK AROUND FOR THOSE VILLAINS!
YES THERE ARE THEIR BIKES AND MARKS! I'LL SCORED
A DIGGER
DIVID THE CAVE WITH HIM! CHUCK "WE'LL DEAL WITH HIM AFTER WE'VE MADE OUR SHARE OUT!"
HE'S MUNKIED, WILLIE FOUND A PRESSIE BUT FRANTICALLY HE RUBBED HIS MAGIC SPECS TO MAKE THEM WORK
HELP ME FARE CAN BY SUBORISE SPACE SHOW ME WHAT TO DO
THE MAGIC WORKED AND HE SAW HIMSELF AS A DARING SPACE INVADER IN THE GALAXY
ON PLANET REALITY
AND LATER ON A SPACESHIP
THE PLANO AWAY OUT OF THE CAVE LEAVING THEY LEFT ONE OF THEIR CRASH HELMETS INSIDE
SO IT WAS BACK AT HIS HOME BASE
CALL ME CAPTAIN BUNK INSTEAD OF YOUR HERO - TO ALIEN HERO
YOU'VE WON IT BUT TOMORROW WE'LL BE BACK
THOSE ROCKS AND BOULDERS DO THERE MAYBE I CAN MOVE THEM WHEN THEY START SEARCHING THE CAVE FOR ME
AND SUCCESS FOR YOU TOO
IT MANAGED TO START A LANDSLIDE AND THEY'RE TRAPPED IN THE CAVE
THE COMMANDER NIMBS CAME TO WELCOME CAPTAIN BUNK
CONGRATULATIONS, CAPTAIN OUR PLANET IS SAFE NOW FROM FURTHER ATTACK
AND IN REAL LIFE SAM'S ARCADE HAS SAFE FROM FURTHER RAIDS
WEARING THE HELMET I FOUND IN THE CAVE HE TRIES OUT HIS NEW LASER ON YOUR OWN?

the 'victim' as possible, and leave the humour to me. I work from photos and have even done pet portraits.

PS: *Would you be able to do a caricature of me? I have an idea to become a stand up comedian. Perhaps you could put a Frank McDiarmid spin on that for me?*

Frank: I'll see what I can do. Perhaps we could have some rotten vegetables being thrown your way (*laughs*)!

PS: *You never know Frank, you may get a load of 'grown up' kids wanting artwork of them from someone who they read as a kid... I think its pretty cool! Have you any other memories of working on comics?*

Frank: I do–but let me give you an example of something that else that happened to me. A few years ago I was lecturing on cartooning and contacted DC Thomson to ask if I could have some of my original artwork for Roger the Dodger. Now remember, there was no big fall out between us, just a change of artists. The response was a sharp intake of breath. "Oh no... but we'll let you have a black and white proof. But we want it back!"

PS: *How did you feel about that?*

Frank: (*laughs*) Well you know... I did get it. But I had to return it! Having said that I have no bad feelings towards them, after all–they started my on my comic path!

PS: *And what ever became of your original artwork for Cheeky weekly and the other Fleetway titles?*

Frank: I believe someone was very astute, and when it all fell apart they were on the spot and gathered up everything they could. Whether they paid for it I have no idea. I think it was another artist whose name escapes me... but after all, I'm up here and only ever get to hear snippets of what's going on. I would love to have some of my original artwork. I have a couple of 'Mustapha Million' and a very few others. But no 'Cheeky'...

PS: *What?! So you haven't any original Cheeky Weekly strips?*

Frank: No. I don't have any of my original strips from *Cheeky*. I'd love some! I would quite happily draw some original art in exchange for some of those originals back. If there's any readers out there that have those originals...

PS: *(laughs) We can but ask!*

Time was running out, so I thanked Frank for his time, and said I'd enjoyed speaking to him to which he replied:

Frank: There's plenty more in me yet! (laughs). Thanks very much, it's been great speaking with you and your readers...

A week or so after our meeting a tube arrived, with a familiar looking postmark. Inside was my very own caricature we'd spoken about!

It had been a pleasure to meet and speak with Frank McDiarmid–one of the great comic artists from the 70s and 80s. And, yes, he's still producing incredible artwork!

If you know the whereabouts of those missing Cheeky strips (or want details on his artwork)... just drop Frank a line at helenmcdiarmid@hotmail.co.uk

BOY BOSS
THE SCENE CHANGED RAPIDLY. WILLIE SAW HIMSELF AS A DARING LIFEGUARD IN AUSTRALIA!
LOOK! A SHARK!
LIFE GUARD
TOO RIGHT WILL BUT I CAN START THE ENGINE TO START!
CHEEKY
I'M GOING TO LOOK FOR SOME OF MY PALS THAT HAVEN'T SEEN FOR AGES
HERE'S THE WORLD'S FEEBLEST ATHLETE JOGGING JEREMY. WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HIM AND A BICYCLE?
WHEEZE GASP!
ONE'S TOO TIRED TO WORK AND THE OTHER'S JUST TWO-TYRED
EEK, PRAY WATCH WHERE YOU ARE GOING!
OI! WHAT DO YOU GET IF YOU CROSS A SWEETS MAKER WITH A NEWS-READER?
TREBOR MACDONALD OI!
GOOD EVEN NO
HELLO DAN DAN THE LAVENDER MAN DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE GARDENER WHO TOOK A PLANT FOR A WALK?
NO HOW DID HE DO THAT?
HALF HARE
HE'S QUICK ON THE DRAW
I'M THE FASTEST HARE ON EARTH!
?
HUH? EVEN YOU COULDN'T HURT YOURSELF WITH AN EGG BUMP BUMP BERNIE!
I TOOK IT FROM THE FRIDGE - TRIPPED IT FLEW FROM MY HAND - HIT DAD HANGING UP A SHELF - HE LET GO - SHELF TOPPLED - LANDED ON ME - BUMP! BUMP!
GROAN!
HO! HO! HO! THIS IS TOO EASY LET'S GO!
HOW ABOUT HELPING ME, ART?
HOI! WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?
KISSY KISSY!
30
HELP CALL HER OFF! WITH OLD FRIENDS LIKE HER WHO NEEDS ENEMIES?
PHEW! I'M TIRED!
WINNING POST
THE WINNER
HO! HO! HO! YOU'RE NOT SO SPEEDY WHEN YOU HAVE TO CARRY A HOUSE ON YOUR BACK!

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME...

CRIKEY! WAS CREATED TO LOOK BACK ON THE GLORY DAYS OF BRITISH COMICS, AN INDUSTRY MANY BELIEVE TO BE ALL BUT DEAD. BUT THERE'S STILL A LOT OF MATERIAL BEING PRODUCED OUT THERE, SO IN THIS NEW NEWS SECTION WE'RE LETTING YOU KNOW WHAT SOME OF IT IS AND WHEN YOU CAN FIND IT. LET US KNOW WHETHER YOU FIND IT OF VALUE OR NOT-AND IF YOU'RE A PUBLISHER, FEEL FREE TO SEND ADVANCE LISTINGS FOR INCLUSION. IT'S FREE!

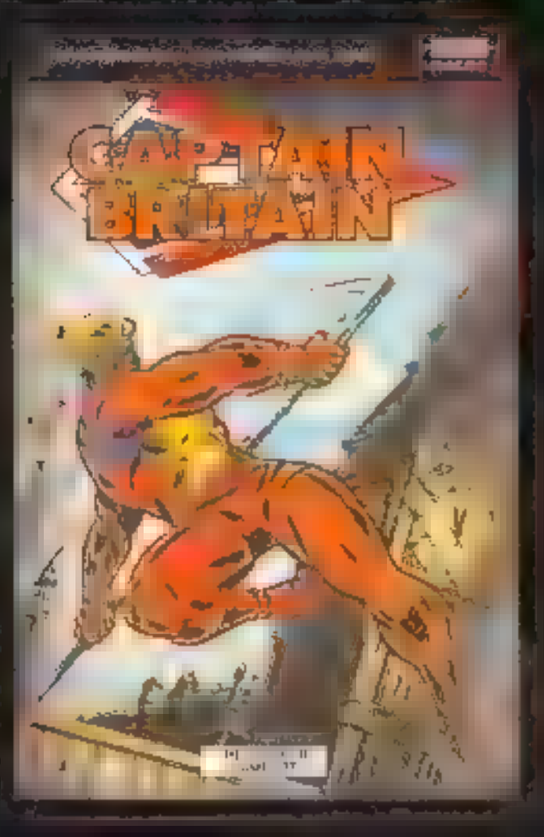
PANINI

Knights of Pendragon: Once & Future (Panini Books £14.99. On sale: 8 October)
Collecting the Knights of Pendragon #1-9, by Dan Abnett, John Tomlinson and Gary Erskine, with a new introduction by Dan Abnett. The classic 1990 series starring Captain Britain, reprinted for the first time ever! 216 pages, approx.

Captain Britain & MI13: Vampire State (Panini Books £12.99. On sale: 7 December)
The final volume of the acclaimed series by Paul Cornell with art by Leonard Kirk, Stuart Immonen and Mike Collins. Reprints Captain Britain & MI13 #10-15 and Annual #1.

Spider-Man: Rise of the Hobgoblin (Panini Books £17.99. On sale: 8 October)
Collects Amazing Spider-Man #238-251by Roger Stern & Tom Defalco, John Romita Jr and Ron Frenz. The stories which introduced a sinister new villain to Spidey's world.

Captain Britain Vol IV: The Siege of Camelot (Panini Books £15.99. On sale: 5 November)
Concluding the epic, never before reprinted Black Knight series by John Stokes, Paul Neary and Steve Parkhouse, plus stories by Dave Thorpe, Alan Moore and Alan Davis.



Avengers: The Bride of Ultron (Panini Books £15.99. On sale: 5 November)
Reprinting Avengers #157-166. Classic action from one of the Avengers' best remembered eras, illustrated by George Perez, John Buscema and John Byrne. Scripts by Gerry Conway and Jim Shooter. 308 pages.

Doctor Who: The Widow's Curse (Panini Books £15.99. On sale: 8 October)
Second volume of comic strips collecting the tenth Doctor's adventures from Doctor Who Magazine and the Doctor Who Storybook. By Ian Edginton, Rob Davis, Dan McDaid and Jonathon Morris, with art by Mike Collins, Roger Langridge, Martin Geraghty, John Ross and Adrian Salmon. 212 pages.

PANINI (CONT)

Doctor Who Magazine #414 (Panini Publishing £3.99. On sale: 15 October)
More comic strip action with the tenth Doctor in 'Ghosts of the Northern Line', plus news and features on the world's longest running sci-fi series.

Doctor Who Magazine #415 (Panini Publishing £3.99. On sale: 12 November)
Continuing 'Ghosts of the Northern Line', plus news and features on the Time Lord.

Doctor Who Magazine #416 (Panini Publishing £3.99. On sale: 9 December)
More news, reviews and comic strip action from the world of Doctor Who.

Mighty World of Marvel #2 (Panini Publishing £2.95. On sale: 29 October)
World War Hulk continues, as the Avengers and Fantastic Four face the fury of the Hulk and his Warbound.

Mighty World of Marvel #3 (Panini Publishing £2.95. On sale: 26 November)
More action and adventure from the mighty world of Marvel.

Mighty World of Marvel #4 (Panini Publishing £2.95. On sale: 23 December)
More action and adventure from the mighty world of Marvel.

Avengers Unconquered #12 (Panini Publishing £2.95 12 November)
More action and intrigue with Earth's mightiest heroes.

Avengers Unconquered #13 (Panini Publishing £2.95. On sale: 10 December)
More action and intrigue with Earth's mightiest heroes.

Marvel Legends #37 (Panini Publishing £2.50. On sale: 21 October)
With Captain America dead, the Red Skull sets his plans in motion. Plus, action with Iron Man and Thor.

Marvel Legends #38 (Panini Publishing £2.50. On sale: 18 November)
More action with Iron Man, Thor and the Winter Soldier.

Marvel Legends #39 (Panini Publishing £2.50 On sale: 16 December)
More action with Iron Man, Thor and...uh...well, Captain America is still dead.

Wolverine & Deadpool #171 (Panini Publishing £2.50 On sale 12 November)
Mutant mayhem with the merc with the mouth and, of course, Wolverine.

Wolverine & Deadpool #172 (Panini Publishing £2.50 On sale 10 December)
Marvel's deadliest mutants in action again.

Essential X-Men #184 (Panini Publishing £2.95 On sale 29 October)
The Messiah Complex continues as the X-Men face deadly new threats.

Essential X-Men #185 (Panini Publishing £2.95 On sale 27 December)
More action with Marvel's mighty mutants.

Fantastic Four Adventures #58 (Panini Publishing £2.50 On sale: 12 November)
Marvel's first family in new and classic adventures.

Fantastic Four Adventures #59 (Panini Publishing £2.50 On sale 10 December)
More new and classic adventures with the FF.

Marvel Heroes #15 (Panini Publishing £2.50 On sale 12 November)
Comic strips and features for 7-10 year olds with all your favourite Marvel heroes.

Marvel Heroes #16 (Panini Publishing £2.50 On sale 10 December)
More fun and thrills for younger readers with Marvels greatest heroes.

Astonishing Spider-Man #67 (Panini £2.50 On sale 28 October)
Bi-weekly thrills and spills with the ever amazing Spider-Man.

Astonishing Spider-Man #68 (Panini £2.50 On sale: 11 November)
Bi-weekly thrills and spills with the ever amazing Spider-Man.

Astonishing Spider-Man #69 (Panini £2.50 On sale 25 November)
Bi-weekly thrills and spills with the ever amazing Spider-Man.

Astonishing Spider-Man #70 (Panini £2.50 On sale 9 December)
Bi-weekly thrills and spills with the ever amazing Spider-Man.

Astonishing Spider-Man #71 (Panini £2.50 On sale 23 December)
Bi-weekly thrills and spills with the ever amazing Spider-Man.

REBELLION

2000AD #1660-1665 *(Rebellion £1.90 On sale every Wednesday, 6 November-11 December)*
Judge Dredd's 'Tour of Duty' in the Cursed Earth continues, plus all your other favourites from the Galaxy's Greatest Comic.

2000AD 2010 *(Rebellion price TBC On sale 18 December)*

100 page Christmas issue *featuring Nikolai Dante in Hero of the Revolution, ABC Warriors in The Volgan War, Stickleback in London's Burning, plus Judge Dredd and new thrill The Grievous Journey of Ichabod Azrael.*

Judge Dredd Megazine #291 *(Rebellion £4.99 On sale 11 November)*
Featuring Judge Dredd, Tank Girl and more mayhem from the Mega City.

Judge Dredd Megazine #292 *(Rebellion £4.99 On sale 9 December)*

DC THOMSON

Commando #4239-4242 *(DC Thomson £1.30 On sale 29 October)*

Commando #4243-4246 *(DC Thomson £1.30 On sale 12 November)*

Commando #4247-4250 *(DC Thomson £1.30 On sale 26 November)*

Commando #4251-4254 *(DC Thomson £1.30 On sale 10 December)*
Traditional action from the long running war comic!

CTRL ALT SHIFT UNMASKS CORRUPTION ANTHOLOGY

THE AYATOLLAH'S SON: STARS

BY LEE O'CONNOR

Checking your email can be exciting. This is something that might not be apparently obvious. It is. Honest. For the modern comic creator, email is the communication method of choice, and as far as I know it's not a faux pas *to e-mail someone in the middle of the night...*

So one day I check my emails and find a message from one Mr. Paul Gravett. Now, you might have heard of Paul and the tireless work he does writing about, exhibiting, reviewing, organising, promoting, editing, publicising and publishing the comic medium. What you might not know is that before I ever met Paul in the flesh he existed - to me anyway - solely as a comic book character. A comic book character in the excellent 'Alec' series by Eddie Campbell. (Incidentally, if you are dedicated to British comics and you haven't read any *Alec* yet, it might be time to ask yourself some searching questions.) In 'Alec: How to be an Artist', Eddie Campbell reveals nothing whatsoever about how to be an artist, but instead relates the blossoming of comics as a viable art form in Margaret Thatcher's Britain of all places. One erstwhile character has the Stan Lee–Jack Kirby-esque moniker of 'The Man at the Crossroads', and history will come to relate that this pictogram is none other than our very own Mr. Gravett. So, anyway, Paul sends me an email one day and it reminds me why checking your email can be exciting. It turns out that there is an artist slot open on an anthology book published by the youth initiative charity *Ctrl.Alt.Shift*, on a short story written by a fellow called Pat Mills, and did I want to have a stab at it..?

Now, a word about Pat Mills - In a strange kind of way, most of this is all Pat's fault. .What I laughably call my 'career' in comics, that is–quite a lot of it was probably down to Pat. In early 1994, whilst poking about in the back of a Newsagents in the little market town in Devon I grew up in, I suddenly found Hammerstein the war-droid pounding a group of Mekaniks in *The Time Tubes*, blasting away on his cannon and crushing fallen baddies under his tank-treaded feet. Yep, *2000AD Monthly* was reprinting the *ABC Warriors*: The Black Hole that issue, and in no time at all I was so much Earthlet grist for the mill of the *2000AD* Nerve Centre. It was Pat's stories I was into the most; *The ABC Warriors*, *Nemesis the Warlock* and *Sláine*, so to be able to work with the man himself was an opportunity I jumped for in no time at all.

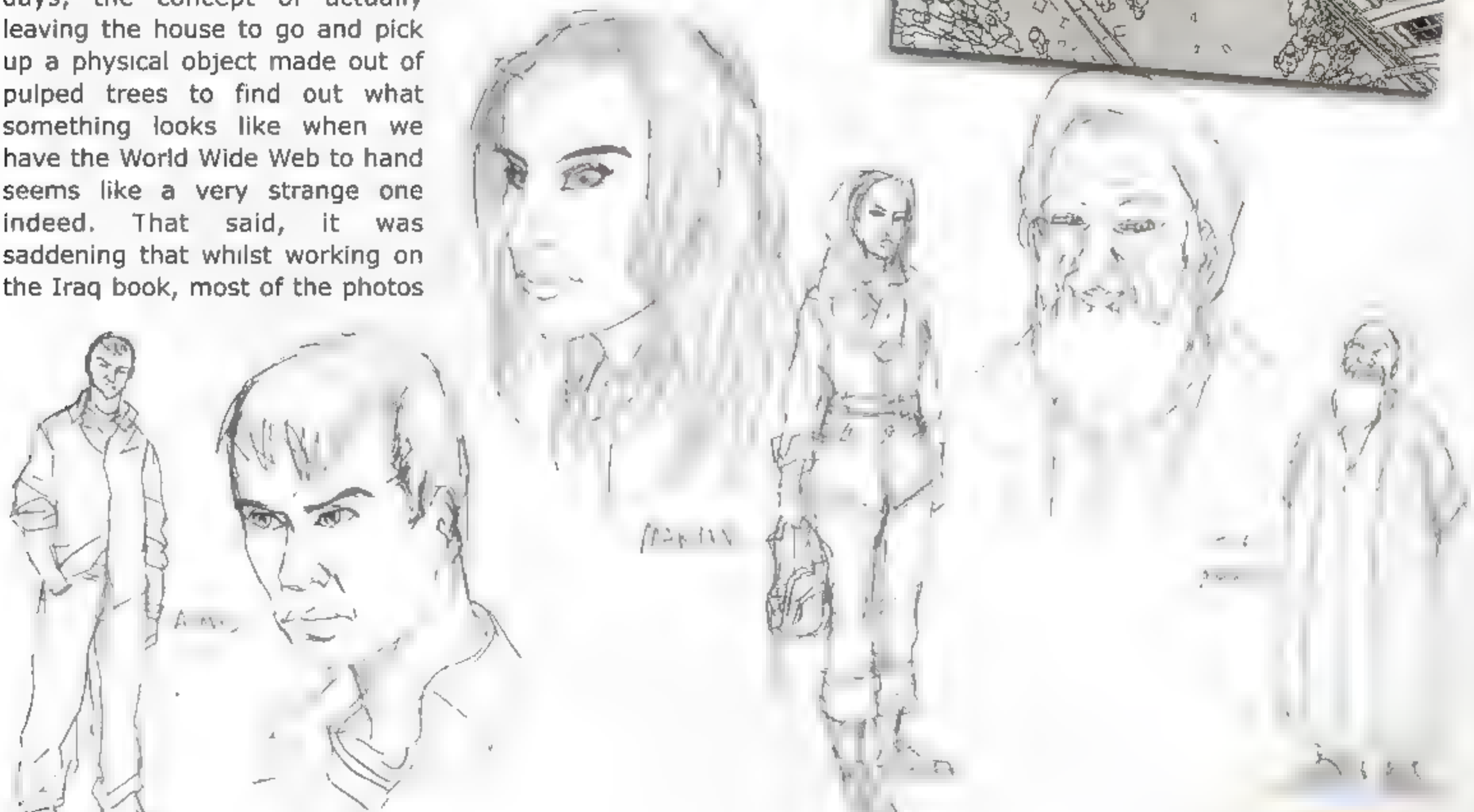
The theme of the anthology is corruption, and Pat's story–'The Ayatollah's Son: Stars'–is set in contemporary Iran and concerns the fallout over the 2009 presidential election there. Our hero is a young man called Ahmad, whose trendy, westernised friends all compare their 'stars', the black marks the Iranian regime have put against their names for trivial things like growing their hair long or having access to foreign media. Ahmad has no stars, as his father is a cleric and a member of the state

BELOW AND ON THE PAGES FOLLOWING, A SELECTION OF CHARACTER SKETCHES AND FINISHED ART FROM STARS

parliament. Things start to change for our boy when he and his friends hit the streets to demonstrate against the early election result that proclaims Ahmadinejad the winner. He meets a girl, and you know what happens when boys meet girls. Anyway, that's about as much as I'm going to give away right now.

When it came to producing the artwork for Pat's script, it was reassuring to my pencil-wielding sinews that I'd already drawn a whole graphic novel set in the modern-day Middle East, in the form of Iraq: *Operation Corporate Takeover*, written by Sean Michael Wilson and published by the international humanitarian charity War on Want. (And probably the reason I had been chosen as the artist on this project in the first place.) So I was familiar with the kind of visual research I would have to do–namely using search engines to plough the online news media for photographs of real, everyday Iranian people, places and things, knowing that the more momentous and dramatic events would be already covered. Now children, once upon a time, artists after images of anything they weren't familiar with would have to go to a library or a bookshop on the off-chance that there was a book hiding somewhere with something juicy in it for them to look at and subsume into their visual memories. These days, the concept of actually leaving the house to go and pick up a physical object made out of pulped trees to find out what something looks like when we have the World Wide Web to hand seems like a very strange one indeed. That said, it was saddening that whilst working on the Iraq book, most of the photos I found on that very same 'Web came online with coverage that featured the word 'bomb' or 'bombing' somewhere quite often, as our media somehow couldn't quite come up with any other way of covering what was really happening. It's just as well that the number of casualties in Iran were absolutely nowhere near those of the protracted quagmire for all concerned that was Iraq, but it didn't make every subsequent camera phone snap of an innocent protestor killed in cold blood on the streets of Tehran that managed to make it out of the country any easier for us in the oh-so-comfortable West to see.

The next port of call was getting the look of each one of the characters in the story down in a quick character sheet, a normal practice for artists before they start strip-work. One of the challenges here was that Ahmad has a group of six student friends who are all male and roughly the same age. Now, differentiating these guys in the finished artwork is the kind of thing that gives a lot of artists nightmares, and you yourself might have >



noticed supporting characters in comic art with wacky haircuts, stuck-on beards or massive glasses because they're an illustrator's stock figure drawing with bits of what one of my old college tutors (and *Hellblazer* artist) Ron Tiner would call "Facial Furniture" stuck on top. Determined as ever to avoid this approach, I tried to give each student a different body and face shape, dress-sense and way of holding themselves. What really helped this were the short character descriptions Pat had supplied, where he'd done exactly the same thing in a literary sense, with a few sentences about each one firmly cementing them as individuals in my head before I even put pencil to paper. After the first round of sketches had been seen by everybody involved, I was gently reminded to give everybody a more Persian nose, which I dutifully did with gusto. The Iranians are a terribly interesting lot to look at, having a mingling of Arabic features with Mediterranean and European ones - I was intrigued to read in one of Pat's little script notes that 'Iranian' translates as 'Aryan', and classically, Iranians had ash-blonde hair. Dress in Iran is a fascinating, particularly for women, being combination of the modest clothing required by the tenets of Islam, high fashion the likes of which wouldn't be out of place in the boutiques of Paris, Rome or Milan, and finally, youth wear considered the norm by young people the world over.

Ahmad and the girl–Maryam–went through a redesign before their final incarnations–my first stab at Ahmad wasn't quite heroic or Persian enough (And some reason I'd drawn him looking like a young Charles Bronson when Pat said maybe he could look a bit like James Coburn. I must have been tired or something). The final Ahmad's looks were based on a photo of a demonstrator in Tehran fleeing a crowd, his arm bleeding. My apologies fly out to that guy if he happens to be reading a magazine on British comics.

My first design for Maryam had quite a hard edge, as Maryam turns out to be a fiercely independent character. It was pointed out that for the heart of the story to work, she would have to have a softer and more alluring appeal, so to produce Maryam Mark

Two, off I went to the interweb again to ogle beautiful Persian women and was able to call it work! Brilliant. I love my job sometimes.

After the artwork for the final pages was finished (to some people's surprise most comic artists–me included–still work with ink on board) it gets scanned in to the computer as normal, and to make the artwork not quite so stark, I decided to drop in some blocks of grey and scanned textures, not only to give the piece a slightly more organic look when it's on the printed page, but also to help the bright white speech balloons stand out for the sake of clear story-telling. The slightly distressed, painterly texture you might be able to pick out in the pages is detail of a scan of a used paint palette. If you ever see the cover of my Iraq book, you might not guess that the texture I used for the ground on it was a scan of the black spots on a banana skin.

Yes, this is the life I chose.

Ctrl.Alt.Shift Unmasks Corruption has the intense privilege of being released as part of the *ComICA* festival at London's Institute of Contemporary Arts, alongside an exhibition at the Lazarides gallery in Soho. The anthology includes work from such luminaries as Bryan Talbot, Dylan Horrocks, Warren Pleece and even musicians Lightspeed Champion and VV Brown–and a quick calculation tells me that the line-up is so international it goes so far as to include someone from each of the world's continents–all coming together in their own way to make an inky stand against something that blights the lives of all of us.

A pretty heart-warming point to sign off on, I think. ●

***Lee O'Connor** is a graduate of the U.K.'s only comic illustration university course. His work has appeared in* **Heavy Metal Magazine** *and the* **Phonogram** *series. His next graphic novel is* **Raven's Gate** *from Walker Books.*

*For future issues of **Crikey!** let us know what you think about our magazine, British comics, your reactions to features or simply make us laugh*
*Our address is: **Crikey!** 13 Rosethorns Close, Gladewood, Middleton, Manchester. M24 6TP*
Or simply contact us through the website : www.crikeyuk.co.uk

IT'S YOUR LETTERS!

Crikey!

I have read your article about Jack Kirby's influence on British comics twice now and I'm probably going to read it again after this email. Why? Well for starters, you have managed to put in words a feeling that has been dogging my comic book reading for about 25 five years now. I'll come back to that in a second

It's easily the most important article I have read in *Crikey!* so far, for the simple reason that, single-handily, you have transcended the form, the usual comic book article, which is keen on its history, its dates, its issue numbers, artists and writers etc. And to a point, a bit of a yawn as well. But don't get me wrong here, I like my comic book history.

However, what you have written about in *How Jack Kirby Saved - Then Destroyed British Comics*, is something much more important than just issues numbers, free gifts and publishing dates. I feel you have addressed the emotion of comic book reading, the personal lament of those of us who jumped ship, left our homegrown comic industry behind for a Stateside fantasy of soap opera froth.

And that's what I can come back to. I can relate to that. Okay, in my case it was Marvel UK that seduced me and I left *Battle*, *Warlord*, *Valiant* and *Action* (of which I had every issue) behind and dumped in the dust bin when I moved And what for exactly? I ended up buying bloody superheroes once *Planet of the Apes* and *Dracula Lives!* bit the dust.

And I don't like superheroes. Or maybe the reason I don't is because I got side stepped by their inane bloody adventures, comic collecting peer pressure played its part too.

X Men this and X-Men that from the late 70s onwards. Actually, I did find *Warren* and Marvel's short lived black and white magazine, *Unknown Worlds of Science Fiction* and *Doc Savage* (which I had bound into volumes many moons ago)

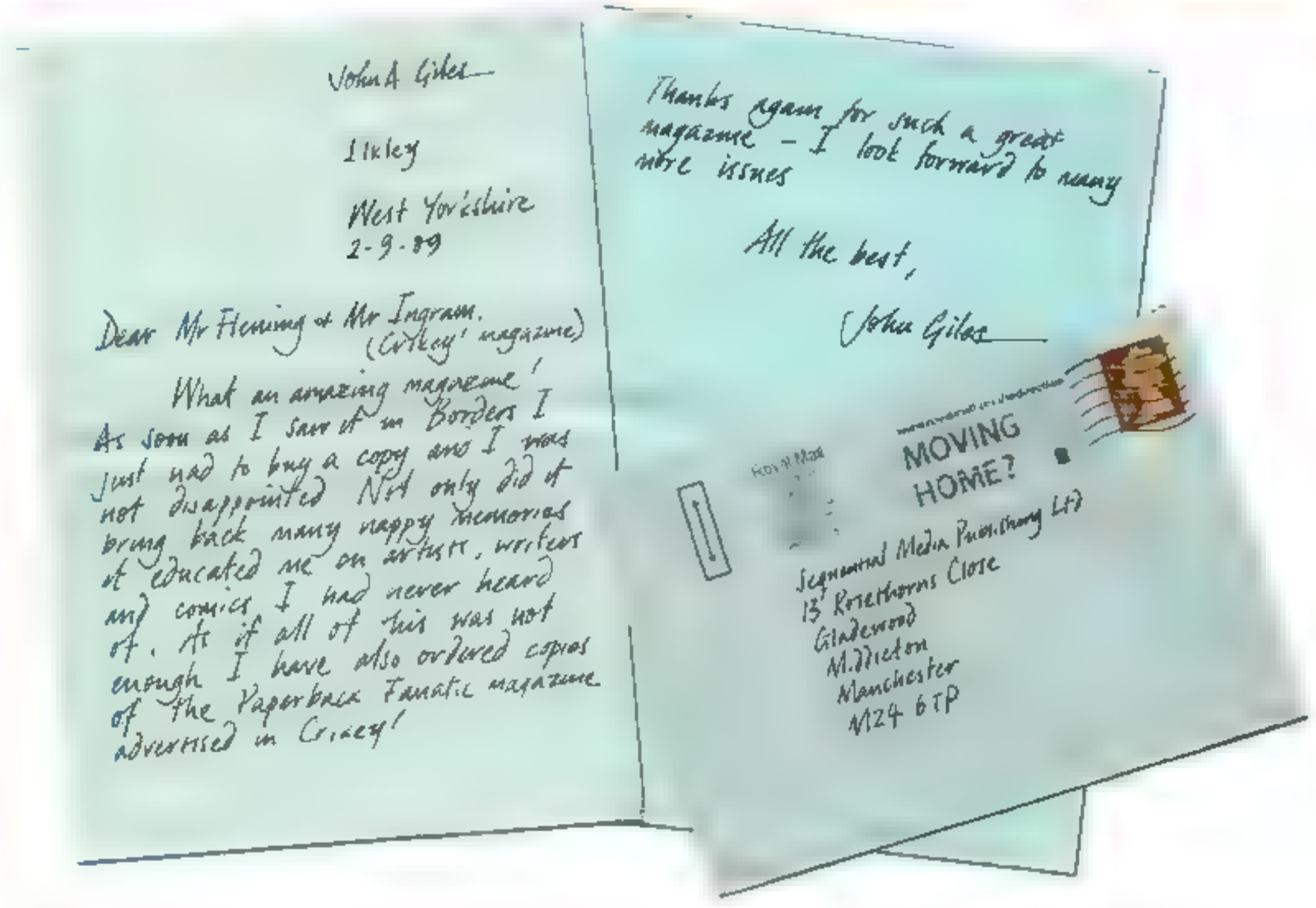
So, the gist of this, somewhat rambling email, is attempting to say to you is: Thank you, at last an article about what it feels like to collect comics and how comics and their artists and publishers make us feel. Actually I think my first exposure to Marvel may have come from A Power Comics annual. I can just about recall that it was a Nick Fury, in black and white, and his car pulled in its tires and left the ground. It sowed the seeds.

I think it was a good title too, guaranteed to get Kirby fans and Kirby haters to stop and read it.

Thanks for such a rewarding read!
Ron Mackenzie
email

Cheers, Ron–humble Glenn.

below is an example of what makes producing *Crikey!* all worthwhile...


John A Giles
Ilkley
West Yorkshire
2-9-89
Dear Mr Fleming & Mr Ingram. (Crikey! magazine)
What an amazing magazine! As soon as I saw it in Borders I just had to buy a copy and I was not disappointed. Not only did it bring back many happy memories of educated me on artists, writers and comics I had never heard of. As if all of this was not enough I have also ordered copies of the Paperback Fanatic magazine advertised in Crikey!
Thanks again for such a great magazine – I look forward to many more issues
All the best,
John Giles
MOVING HOME?
Segmental Media Publishing Ltd
13 Rosethorns Close
Gladewood
Middleton
Manchester
M24 6TP

Hi Glenn & Tony

Just a quick note to say how much I enjoyed *Crikey!* 11. The shift in perspective to cover more adult content comics and the wonderful article on David Wright have really lifted your new look into a different and less nostalgic publication–but I must confess to a twinge of nostalgia at the sight of Charlie Peace–took me right back to my days as office boy on *Buster!*

All the very best
Kevin O'Neill
London

Thanks Kev–Indeed Crikey! *has changed a good deal since the early days and, it must be said, for the better. And we aim to keep changing*

Crikey!

Hi. Just a quick note to say thanks for producing such a consistently entertaining and most enlightening magazine

Crikey! #10 was a real eye-opener!! Good to see you expanding your scope and I am sure the research into the *Carrie* and *Wanda* articles was, *cough*, tough work. I am really enjoying the ongoing Marvel UK series of articles so hope there will be a few more to come

Would you ever consider looking at UK Fanzines and the people involved etc? I appreciate that there was limited circulation but I used to love *Comics Unlimited*, *Fantasy Advertiser* etc and it'd be fun to know where some of these people ended up

Anyway, I've attached my attempt at a Comicy Saturday submission which, even if not used, reminded me how much fun Saturdays were!

Regards
Mike Burnett
email

An article about British Fanzines is not out of the question, Mike–and thanks for your 'My Comicy Saturday' submission... and be careful what you wish for !

Crikey!

I loved the ish you did on babes in comics (*Crikey!* 10). Discovering recently that the same artist who drew *Lady Penelope* also did 'Oh Wicked Wanda' for *Penthouse* was jet another nail in the coffin of my innocence I can't look at those old Lady P tales now without expecting her to start stripping off any moment! I have to say, the mag is going from strength to strength and is now on my 'must read' list

Best regards
Paul Ware
email

Sorry Paul the 'Wicked Wanda artist (the late, great, Ron Embleton) did not in fact draw Lady Penelope you're mistaking him with Eric Eden

Hi Glenn

I have just finished looking through the latest issue, and must say I thoroughly enjoyed the piece on *Marvel Man*. It was also great to see the interview with Stephen Holland I'm a reader of his blog, and am certainly looking forward to seeing his new line of UK reprints, being published through Bear Alley *The Sez Dez* feature was another great one, it's easy to forget how much Dez has done, and this was a great reminder! Here's hoping that selling into the high street will get *Crikey!* into the hands of a new, much larger audience!, and possibly build up extra interest in the direct comic market!

Looking forward to the next issue already!

Regards,
Andy Martin
Diamond Comics UK

Thanks Andy–I'm sure you will indeed enjoy this issue!

Crikey!

Best issue so far and not just because of my article (honest)! And quite a lively letters page too–with it's ever Mayfair collectors! (I thought I was the only one in the village!) A lot of people say I over use exclamation marks. But I say to them: Oi, no I don't!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

But you know, I digress.

More importantly, back to *Crikey!* 11. It not only looks good and reads well but it feels bloody brilliant too. There's a stronger sense professionalism about it than previous issues. I don't mean that as a back-

artwork ©Patrick Wright

Crikey!

Congratulations on the quality of *Crikey!*, which has steadily got better with each issue, and thank you for the foresight of including the lesser known artists like David Wright–not to be confused with the American Don Wright and Canadian Doug Wright–what fabulous line work and pin-up art he produced! Pin-ups being of great interest to me, from Charles Dana Gibson. Simms Campbell and Fritz Willis.

Looking forward to the next issue of *Crikey!*

C L Roberts

Pwllheli

The David Wright article was well received. His artwork (above) is just beautiful and I for one would call him an illustrator as opposed to a mere 'comic strip' artist–alongside such lumineries as Frank Bellamy, Don Lawrence and Ron Embleton. It's just a shame all of these talents are no longer with us–but what a legacy they left us. We unfortunately forgot to credit Patrick Wright and carol-day.com for the photo of David Wright and some of the art in David Roach's article. Our apologies for the oversight. David's son Patrick owns all the copyrights to his father's work as shown last issue. For more on David Wright and Carol Day I urge you to check out www.carol-day.com and www.rogerclarkart.com now!

handed complement either. Because *Crikey!* has always been professional, it just seems ultra professional now.

See, I can dig myself out of holes!

I'm a sucker for interviews too; I re-read them, which some people find odd, but hey, that's me. Great articles too, I loved the scope and the insight. And the fact is I learn something new from the ones I would not usually read. Good to see *Tammy* article reprinted. You know, I have a soft spot for that particular comic...

The page layouts are fantastic, dynamic and evocative; the essence of the comics redrawn on the pages of *Crikey!*. Oh, wait, I'm drifting into hyperbole and reviewing mode. But I hope you get the idea that I really liked issue 11.

And that old *Dark They Were And Golden Eyed* ad, superb!!! I was in London earlier on this year and took a wander down St Anne's Court just to look at where the first comic shop I ever visited used to be. I took some pictures too but that's me. Saddo to the last! I know where Bear Lane is too!!!!

Top notch Dez Skinn and Steve Holland interviews. Now I'm wondering if this is the same Steve Holland who used to publish a Comic magazine in the early 90s? I used to do reviews for it. And how many Steve Hollands can there be in the world? Probably quite a lot I suppose.

Anyway, best to keep this short because frankly I could go on singing *Crikey!*'s praises for many, many more screens than just this one. But you have a life to lead and, according to Mrs Hooker, so do I.

Good to put a face to an email too. And I liked *Hatch* too, it made me smile.

Thank you for *Crikey!*, it's what UK comics have needed, a home of their own.

Got to go, getting misty eyed and nostalgic!

Best

Steve Hooker

email

We thought issue 11 of Crikey! *was the best so far–but then we put this issue together and...*

Dear Crikey!,

"The Great British Comics Magazine!" is how Crikey! promotes itself, so it's obviously about the great British comics of our youth. One only need look at most of the covers so far to see the direction that was originally intended. Obviously, if some of the great British Comic *artists* of our youth dabbled in eroticism then it is legitimate to refer to the fact and illustrate it with a few discreet and appropriately cropped examples in passing, but to devote entire articles to the subject is to shift the goalposts somewhat.

Also, to describe those who like to keep the subjects of kids' comics and eroticism separate as "puritanical and small-minded", as Albert Evans did in his letter printed in issue 11, is to miss the point entirely. I'm sure that more suitable publications for articles about comic strips that originally appeared in pornographic magazines must already exist, and, if not, perhaps that should be your next endeavour.

Why do I take this view? On the very day that Borders in Glasgow put the first issue of *Crikey!* to be sold outside of speciality shops on display, it was placed in the kids' comics section amongst *The Beano* and all sorts of other juvenile publications.

What else do you expect given the cover and contents of your magazine? I'm sure this would have been the case in their other stores also.

Gentlemen–*Crikey!* for articles and artwork that pertain to our childhoods and the innocence thereof–other more adult interests can and should be catered for elsewhere.

Regards,

Kid Robson

email

The actual positional placing of Crikey! *in shops is beyond our control, but it is actually supposed to be with other special interest magazines rather than comics, since its intended audience is somewhat older than that.*

We'll be taking the matter up with Borders, rest assured. But as far as your points go I can really only refer you to my answer to Geraint last issue: Crikey! *is dedicated to British comics and comic art, and is as far as I know the only publication regularly covering the subject.*

We don't set out to offend, but neither will we limit ourselves unduly. Many readers seem to favour a broader mix of features.

However, a part of the reason #10 contained so many features on adult orientated comics is so that they would see print before our arrival in the high street. You're unlikely to see us treading the same ground again in the near future. >

Hello Crikey! *People*

Keep up the good work–things are really looking good–your efforts are appreciated!

Best Wishes

John Swan

Tyne and Wear

Short and very definitely to the point, John–you win the prize for the shortest letter to Crikey! ever! Thanks!

Crikey!

May I congratulate both yourself and the team on a splendid magazine. Each issue has improved especially with the colour edition. I feel that you have got the contents just right with a mixture of nostalgia, artwork and fact. I feel the latter is important since the history of a particular publication gives you much more insight into its origins. I am also glad that you include newspaper strip articles since this is a topic which has been neglected, but founded the origins of quite a few famous British comics.

I realise that research and the corresponding script is not easy due to both time and sources but you seem to have discovered quite a lot through your collaborators.

Long may it continue and best wishes for the future.

David Farnworth

Bolton

Thanks David, the people who contribute with articles and ideas area big part of Crikey!'s success–as are those who buy the magazine...

Crikey!

Congratulations on a very interesting issue 11, which is good value indeed at £4.99. I am pleased to renew my subscription. I particularly enjoyed the article on 'Marvelman', who is certainly not forgotten by those of us who read the comics when they came out. There does seem to be renewed interest: issue 87 of 'Atler Ego', intended for the USA, also has a long feature.

Your update was most interesting: DC now owns the Marvel Family 'Shazam' titles and Marvel owns the Marelman Family–fascinating!

I was born in 1946 and was an 'Eagle' boy. In those days I never considered saving them as a cillection, and later, as an adult, bought reprints of Dan Dare, Jack O'Lantern and other characters I still remember remarkably well! In the late 1950s I spent most Saturdays visiting the town market in Gravesend, where I first saw the L Miller comics of The Marvelman Family, and, occasionally, Captain Marvel junior. I was attracted by the

characters, the clean lines and simple action packed stories, and did build up quite a collection. Later, in adulthood, I filled some gaps with facsimile comics from a chap and I ended up with an almost complete run of all three 'Marvelman' titles.

I did buy 'Warrior', but was uneasy with the content and so was never a fan...

Best Wishes

Chris Nicholls

Bristol

An interesting point to end on, Chris. Some would no doubt say some of our best talent made their debuts in the pages of Warrior *before going onto greater things. Anyone care to join the debate?*

Crikey!

Congratulations on the latest *Crikey!*. Full colour has certainly added to the professional look of the mag, but the writing continues to improve and seems, to me at least, more detailed: the Marvelman and Dez Skinn pieces were particularly enjoyable. With shorter articles, it's a good idea to follow up with another on the same theme - the Euan Kerr, followed by *Dennis the Menace*, and the *Striker* pairing for example.

Not for the first time, a crucial subject was touched upon - i.e. the demise of the British action comic. Glenn's somewhat tongue-in-cheek defamation of Jack Kirby in this regard was –

deliberately – a light-hearted article, which dealt with a serious subject, referenced elsewhere in the same issue. There's an extended article - if not a whole book - to be written on what killed the traditional British comic (particularly the ones 'for boys'). It would be interesting to construct a time-line from, say, the launch of *Eagle* followed by the Fleetway line (*Lion* & *Tiger*) and including the later *Victor*, *Valiant* etc of the early 60s, but also the cancellations/combining of titles. Also the heyday of digest monthly comics, which was for a time extremely varied - *Thriller Library*, *Cowboy* and *Lone Star* as well as the *War*, *Battle*, and later *Commando* stuff, which gradually shrank to the WWII titles, eventually only *Commando* surviving. Side by side, the re-introduction of American comic books to the UK due to new distribution circa 1959 and the–in retrospect–suicidal tendency of British editors to lease Marvel strips for British comics which helped fuel demand for the 'real thing'. Also the increasing trend to reprint British strips (sometimes clumsily re-naming characters, sometimes using old story lines using new artwork & new characters) within a few years (at a time when comic readers were staying on for longer and looking for something new) which made *Eagle* and *Lion*, for example, feel stale and repetetive by the end. It's a fascinating, complex and, ultimately, sad story.

In that context, good to see Dez name-check the Top Three and Radar monthlies (Pecos Bill was another from the same stable–were they translations from European sources?). Anyone know any more about these, or have some in their collections?

Hatch looks great–don't know where it's going, but a nice addition.

Geraint Davies

email

Thanks for the comments, Geraint, and so pleased you enjoyed issue 11! Glenn to write anything against the late, great Mr Kirby? Heaven forbid!

Crikey!

Keep up with the marvelous work you are doing.

Now that *Comics International* is practically defunct, you are providing a lifeline to UK comics. How about introducing a news section to add to all the brill nostalgic aticles - British comics news only of course!

Make Mine *Crikey!*

Steve Cook

Cwmbran

..."Make Mine..."–I've heard that someplace else, Steve–you're showing your age! A news section,eh...

Glenn

Thanks for the latest issue of the new, improved *Crikey!* and an absolute corker it was as well.

Since you and Tony have adopted stewardship of *Crikey!* the magazine has been steadily improving in terms of the balance of material and dropping some of the more saccharine-tinged "wasn't life just great in the 1950s" nostalgia. And the latest issue was a prime example of this with articles covering the whole gamut of British comics. My personal favourite was Martin Jones *My Comicy Saturday* as I share his enthusiasm for the likes of *Nemesis the Warlock* and his own memorabilia absolutely brought the article to life. You took full advantage of the increased page count and colour-some great layouts and not one piece felt like filler.

I think you should continue to avoid becoming a DC Thomson newsletter and celebrate all forms of British comics, including adult and underground material. That some of the recent selection of 'adult' material divided opinion on the letters page is probably a good thing. I did find it amusing that a few nipples caused such consternation amongst some readers–I don't recollect any of them writing in to complain about racism and xenophobia when you reproduced panels from certain war comics? But to give your correspondents their due, no-one appeared to be too imbalanced at the increased nipple count.

Suggestions for the future? More on the 1970s please–especially the likes of *Valiant* and *Battle*. How about an interview with Hunt Emerson whose underground comix *Thunderdogs* was a teenage favourite? And lots more Pat Mills please! The man is a legend. Carlos Ezquerra is surely ripe for an interview as the most consistent British artist of the last 30 years. How about a few reviews? There's so much being re-released in terms of classic British comics that it would be good to have a guide as to which ones I should be spending my pennies on.

Please keep up the good work.

Justin Marriott

email

We'll certainly try and thanks for the positive comments, Justin–and, as we aim to please, we seem to have pre-emptied your sugestions for Battle and more of Pat Mills via 'double whammy' with the feature of D–Day Dawson a couple of pages back. And you may find a review somewhere in this issue too! As you are clearly aware, Crikey! *is evolving with every issue so, yes, we will be featuring more from the 70s. And 30s. And 40s. And 50s...*

Crikey!

Whilst many of your readers appear to be relatively young, do you think that we 'old codgers' could have a little of our era? In particular the 40s and 50s–even earlier wouldn't go amiss. Thank you in anticipation...

Glynn D Parry

Wirral

Well, Glynn - I can only refer you to the answer above! 'Old codgers'..?!

That's it for this issue. Keep your letters coming and we'll talk again ... in 60 days!

DEZ SKINN

Grovelling. apology time: In the Marvelman piece in Crikey! *11, I indicated that Dez Skinn had paid Mick Anglo upfront for the rights to MM back in 1982. In fact, Dez has pointed out that this wasn't actually the case. Here are the facts from the man himself...*

When I told him we'd like to revamp Marvelman, on one of his visits up to our Soho offices, Mick Anglo wasn't fussed either way but he thought the neckline on our character sketch was too high for T-shirt merchandising (good point there)! While his mate Denis Gifford detested our version, he was fairly blase about it all but I said that if we could make it work again it could become popular enough to justify reprinting some of the old stories and paying them for such (and as Don Lawrence who wrote and drew the best ones was a good mate of mine I'd have found it embarrassing not to).

Revamping a character to make his back catalogue reusable had worked with Captain Britain only about two years earlier so I saw no reason why we couldn't pull the same thing off again.

But outside of the Marvelman Special which Marvel themselves brought to a premature end, it's a shame it's taken 25 years longer than I expected thought! And bloody ironic it's Marvel now paying up as I'd offered it to them for a US edition back in 1984, long before speaking to Pacific and Eclipse.

I only hope that the estates of Roy Parker and Don Lawrence will be similarly renumerated as they did the actual writing and drawing and I'm told they were only paid a pound a page for their labours back then! If not, it's an unholy precedent (although it would suit me if Marvel wants to take that route. Night-Raven and friends anybody?).

Ta, Dez

Thanks for the clarification, Dez!
Tony Ingram
co-editor

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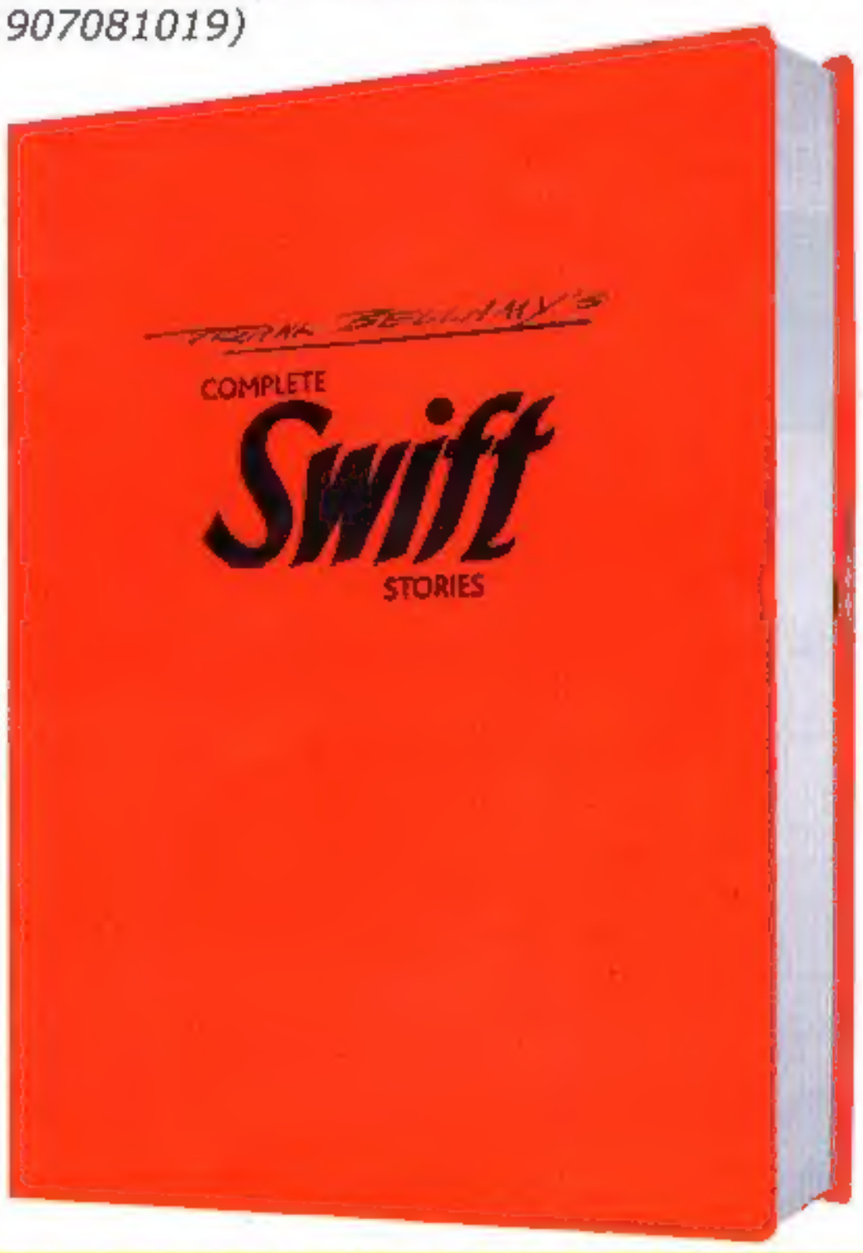

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